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E JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

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first woman, said to Adam,
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y is the ish Theological Seminary Afraid of This Woman?

Truths and Speculations About Sex and Jewish Women

Divorce Jewish Style: A Guide for the Oppressed

Where to Go for What If You're Jewish and Female

Sequential Self-Portraits
by Eve Kessler

Eve Kessler, 24, a native New Yorker and a distant relative of Sholem Aleichem. Loves the name Eve. "It doesn't have subservient connotations for me." A bachelor's degree in in classical archeology from Franklin and Marshall and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the California Institute of the Arts. Discovered photography on an archeological dig in Arizona three years ago. Now working on hand-colored photographs. Exhibiting in the group show "Self Portraits" at New York City's Midtown YM-YWHA Gallery through Aug. 25.

Volume 1 No. 3

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Beruriah: Her Word Became Law

by Leonard Swidler

In the second century, when women were secluded, subordinate and subservient, one woman—Beruriah—gained a towering reputation as a scholar, teacher and arbiter of Jewish law. Read how she argued with wit and conviction against the prevailing attitudes towards her sex.

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Gentlemen's Agreement at the Seminary

by Amy Stone

The men who make the decisions at the Jewish Theological Seminary keep turning away women who want to become Conservative rabbis. They say Conservative Judaism isn't ready for women in the pulpit, but women aspirants are determined to take the male mystique out of the Conservative rabbinate.

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Circumcision Is No Insurance

by Sharon Lieberman

Jewish women have had lower rates of cervical cancer than women in other ethnic groups. Myth has it that the reason is their circumcised partners. But research on cervical cancer shows that a woman's sexual behavior is a far more important factor than her partner's circumcision—and Jewish women's sexual behavior is changing.

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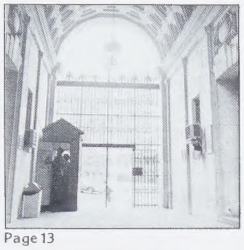

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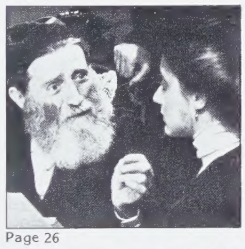

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Jewish Divorce Law: If We Must Part, Let's Part as Equals

by Blu Greenberg

Divorce Jewish style is strictly the man's right—by law, a woman cannot divorce her husband. And that's the problem. Now it's time for interpreters of *halachah* (Jewish law) to insure equality in divorce for women; and it *is* possible.

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The Israeli rabbinate has control over divorce—and thus over the country's women. Extortion by vindictive husbands whose wives want a divorce is but one of the abuses under this system.

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How Was This Passover Different From All Other Passovers?

edited by Reena Friedman

Looking back on the seders, most women remember cooking and serving. ("For this we came out of Egypt?") But a growing number of women have gone beyond merely enabling their men to conduct the seder.

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Lilith is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve, who insisted on equality with Adam.

After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her "Lilith." Adam said, "You are fit to be below me and I above you." Lilith said, "We are both equal because we both come from the earth." (From the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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From the Editors

Our minds/our bodies
Who LILITH's readers are

Jewish women have, for centuries, been conditioned to forego the development of two aspects of life: our capacity for intellectual growth (exclusively the turf of men) and an interest in the pleasures of the body (which was regarded as distracting men from study).

The article on Beruriah, the only woman scholar in all Talmudic literature, zeroes in on attitudes which still seem to prevail at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Conservative rabbinical school which is closed to women.

If Beruriah were alive today, the JTS would neither accept her as a rabbinical student nor as a religious arbiter; *i.e.*, they wouldn't even go as far as did the sages of the second century!

While authorities at the Conservative and Orthodox rabbinical schools must still regard us as sexually tempting, some other Jewish men in the entertainment world seem to feel that we're not tempting *enough*. Everywhere we've lectured, audiences ask: Why all the jokes alleging Jewish women are bad bed partners? There are no scientific findings on whether this is possibly true or not, nor is there any data on how Jewish women feel about Jewish *men*.

The first task, we felt, was to initiate the process of asking questions on this subject and putting some speculations on the table for Jewish women to examine. This is the purpose of our discussion article. It will be a long time before there are definitive answers and analyses—and these will come from *you*.

In our attempt to find out more about Jewish women—particularly the women who read LILITH—we ran a survey in our premier (Fall '76) issue. The results show that our readers are located in every state and province and in Israel, Australia, South America and Western Europe, with the New York area (34%) and California (12.2%) having the largest number of LILITH readers. (A complete breakdown is available.)

The many women attracted to this magazine nationwide have a phenomenally high level of education. Nearly 44% have graduate degrees and another 20.4% have done graduate study. Most (84%) have had some Jewish education, whether in *yeshivahs*, Hebrew day schools, afternoon Hebrew schools, Sunday schools, or in adult programs, and many are dissatisfied with its quality. The majority (57%) belong to Jewish organizations, ranging from Hadassah to *tzedakah* (Jewish charity) groups for collective giving. More than half our readers have been to Israel, and 48% belong to synagogues. Our readership is clearly concerned about Jewish life and eager for changes to enable all of us to participate in it fully and equally.

Rembrandt

Letters

We hope that readers will not only share their views with LILITH's editors and readers in the form of Letters to the Editor, but will also submit their opinions in longer form. The editors especially welcome experiential articles about how we are living today as Jewish women—our struggles, lifestyles, victories. These articles can be in the form of transcribed oral history, journals, etc.

In the wake of our readers' enthusiastic responses to the section in our second issue entitled "Ten Women Tell The Ways We Are," LILITH hopes to feature similar biographical accounts on a regular basis.

"Compassionate Elephant" by Betty La Duke

Dear Sisters,

Mazeltov and *toda raba* [thanks]. Your (no, OUR) new publication is beautiful. When I finished reading the magazine —every morsel—I felt as if I'd been embraced.

Reva M. Gross
Atlanta, Ga.

Dear Editors:

I'm very pleased to see that American Jewish women now have a magazine to explore issues of special concern to them. Two years ago a conference called *Tzena* was held in Philadelphia for women who wanted to examine some of these issues. There was money left over from the conference and since we feel that your magazine is continuing the work that our conference was interested in, we would like to donate this money to you. We hope our donation will help LILITH in reaching many women.

Lessa F. Gornish
(Chairperson, Tzena)
University City, Mo.

Dear Friends:

I have just read the second issue of LILITH from cover to cover and enjoyed it immensely. The interview with Phyllis Chesler was so wonderful, and said so many things that we would never have dared to say years ago, that it made my back teeth ache. Keep up your good work.

Clara Lavine
Sarasota, Fla.

Dear Ms.,

Reading the Chesler interview made me feel as if I were on a seesaw. I think the division between men and women at the Western Wall should be eliminated if for no other reason than the fact that such a religious approach verges on idol worship of a wall.

But on the other hand, I disagree with her thinking that a government with a strong religious party is a theocracy. Almost every country in the world has a religious character to it and most have religious parties of varying influence. The phrase "Jewish Vatican" is symptomatic of a tendency in feminist thinking to yoke together the most unlikely ideas. In this kind of thinking, a patriarchal religious culture becomes synonymous with a patriarchal social structure, whereas in fact they may not reflect upon each other. All the major existing religions, except possibly Hinduism, were founded by men and are patriarchal in structure. Nor does it follow that where a religion allows for goddesses and priestesses that the social status of women is elevated.

Dr. Roberta Kalechofsky
Marblehead, Mass.

Dear Editors,

It was rewarding to read of Dr. Chesler, who does meaningful work in the general culture and who retains such a sense of spiritual nurture from her own Judaism.

Leni Crounse
Omaha, Neb.

Your interview with Phyllis is terrific! And the second issue looks great.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin
Ms. Magazine
New York, N.Y.

Dear Editors,

I am the teacher-director of a preschool for Jewish children. There is an appalling lack of quality in literature for the young Jewish child. Beyond this is the fact that whatever is available stereotypes women as wives, mothers, enablers, caregivers and nurturers.

There has been so much research done on the importance of establishing positive role models. How can we Jews, who profess to be so concerned about education, completely ignore our own young children? I would like to see an article in LILITH directing iteself to this problem.

Lois Stanley
New York, N.Y.

Dear LILITH,

We want to thank you for "Electra the Maccabee" (second issue). Jan read it to her third and fourth grade kids in Sunday school. They were captivated by it and afterward played "Pin Elisheva on the elephant."

We liked the points the story made for Jewish feminism and Jewish identification. It also emphasized the Jew as freedom fighter and not as warrior. The high point for us was when Elisheva did not heed the suggestion to go home like a good girl and let the men fight, but replied that it was her fight as much as any other Jew's.

The important aspect of this story is that the kids really ate it up, the sad point is that we do not have enough of this high-quality material for the kids, so it has limited impact. If you know of any other people interested in producing alter-

native material for Yiddishe kinder, let us know.
Jan and Su, Garin Levyatan
Berkeley, Cal.

Ed. note: Readers may be interested in the second Conference on Alternative Jewish Education scheduled for August 24-29, 1977, Rochester, N.Y. For information contact Tzadok, 15 East 26 St., N.Y.C. 10010.

Dear Women,

My personal ovation to Bob Lamm's "Fear of Feminism" (in LILITH's premiere issue). Having been involved with the perfect model of the role of male dominance that the author discusses, I never could quite understand why he guiltlessly defended his chauvinism with "but that's how I was brought up." Now I understand it all too well and with it, the pathology that was masked by his "caring concern of my interests."
Barbara Kellerman
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Sisters,

LILITH is the best thing to be published in years. I hope you will voice your protest as I already have, to the Israel Aliyah offices. Their *aliyah* (immigration to Israel) applications are very sexist. For example, they say, "your picture" and next to it "wife's picture." They assume that the male (boss) is filling it all out. We've got a lot of work ahead of us to smash patriarchy. Shalom.
Dov Klein
Tucson, Ariz.

Dear LILITH,

I love your magazine. It makes me realize that I'm not along in my frustration and pain in being a Jewish woman. Maybe my daughter will have an easier time of being herself.
Avie O. Cohen, M.D.
Birmingham, Ala.

Editor,

As a middle-ager, I confess to some timidity about pricking my consciousness too much lest it springs leaks too hard to handle.... I'll risk it. A suggestion: perhaps LILITH could provide an occasional "Consciousness Call" feature to call out attention to the many fictions and frictions imposed on our psyches via literature.

For instance, as I read Dr. Dyer's recent best seller *Your Erroneous Zones*, I wondered why he chose to identify ethnically only one of his numerous case histories: a Jewish man with mama problems. Maybe I'm getting super sensitive. Or maybe only Jewish people are worthy of identification when negative images are projected....
Miriam Jaffe
San Mateo, Cal.

Dear LILITH,

I believe our great task is "creating ourselves." This means innovation, experimentation and new pathways. I have seen these in the first 2 issues. Keep it up.
Kate Koelle
Seattle, Wash.

Dear LILITH:

I am an Orthodox Jewish woman, 24, who attended *yeshivah* through the 12th grade, had my "consciousness raised" while attending Barnard College, and most recently received my M.A. one month after giving birth to our daughter. I was brought up in a home where I was encouraged to pursue my studies and a career and to fulfill whatever potential I, as a person, had. I hope to encourage my daughter in the same way.

I believe that Judaism, as it exists now, is often discriminatory to women. Although I would like to see those aspects changed, the fact that I choose to be Orthodox compels me to integrate my feminist beliefs within a framework of *halachah*.

Enclosed is the subscription for LILITH which I am sending in the hope that you will not forget your Orthodox sisters who cannot, will not and wish not to relinquish a halachic way of life while supporting the feminist cause. I hope LILITH will speak not only to those who want to completely tear down the *mechitzah* [separation of the sexes at prayer] but also to those of us who want to change its position yet remain on its other side.
Renee Septimus
New York, N.Y.

Dear LILITH,

I was somewhat dismayed by some of the implications of "The High Price of Failure" (premiere issue). Like the author, Mary Cahn Schwartz, I have known some castrating "Jewish" mothers and some spoiled "Jewish" American Princesses. However, not all of them were in fact Jewish and I resent the characterization of these personality types as Jewish types.

I am reminded of an incident several years ago when a relative said, upon first seeing my baby daughter, "She's so pretty, she's just like a little *shiksah*." If we are pretty or graceful or witty or elegant—no matter we are Jewish—we are just like *shiksahs*. Conversely, if we are cruel or selfish, castrating or destructive, no matter if we are Catholic, Baptist, Moslem or atheist, we are "Jewish" mothers or "Jewish" American Princesses.
Sheila Adelman Abrams
Drexel Hill, Pa.

Dear Madame,

Judaism is basically a home-centered, family-oriented religion. This makes it very difficult for single-parent families to fully enjoy the holidays, to participate easily in the rhythm of Jewish life. Most of the single-parent family units are headed by women and many have never acquired the skills necessary to celebrate Jewish occasions.

The older single Jewish woman who is still independent and living privately also needs attention. No, she does not want to be patronized nor does she want a Golden Age club. Maybe by exchanging ideas, using your publication as the vehicle, we can begin to list the needs of this group and look for solutions.
Vivian Bricklin Levin
Washington, D.C.

Dear Editors,

Before LILITH made its debut, the only magazines available to Jewish feminists were *Ms.* or those published by Jewish women's organizations—which were devoted to fund-raising rather than helping Jewish women become aware of themselves as individuals. LILITH is the ideal magazine for the feminist who is also committed to her Jewish heritage.
Nancy Leah Dudwick
Silver Spring, Md.

Dear Women,

I'm enclosing a gift subscription for my daughter. I hope LILITH's circulation will be wide enough to raise the consciousness of Jewish women everywhere. May it serve to enlighten our men to the fact that our (female) Jewish souls cry out for responsible participation in prayer alongside them.
Estelle Silbert
Nashville, Tenn.

Please send a gift subscription to my wife. I hope I don't live to regret it.
Melvin L. Zurier
Providence, R.I.

Dear LILITH Sisters,

I bought your magazine yesterday for the first time. Now I know the meaning of "Trust in God—She Will Provide." She has—in introducing me to you. In sisterhood,
Tamara Saltiel
San Francisco, Cal.

"In a coma! I thought she was Jewish!"

Some truths and some speculations about Jewish women and sex—by Susan Weidman Schneider

A prince enters a castle, and finds a beautiful woman lying on a bed. He tiptoes into her room and ravishes her. As he leaves, he is approached by the lord of the castle.

LORD of CASTLE: "Have you seen my poor daughter? She's been in a coma since her horse threw her last week."

PRINCE: "In a coma! I thought she was Jewish!"

There are many variations on this joke, usually told by male Jewish comics on late-night T.V. or at Catskill resorts. These nasty sketches about Jewish women are all insulting, saying that Jewish women don't like sex, are "unresponsive," "don't do it."

In mid-70's America, suggesting that certain people *as a group* aren't interested in sex is like suggesting in another time that they were witches or heretics. It's not a compliment.

What's going on? What does the proliferation of negative caricatures of Jewish women signify? Why are Jewish men telling jokes about Jewish women—when there is no comparable *oeuvre* of jokes about Greek or Italian or Baptist women?

Why are the jokes about sex? Why in public? In other words, why are Jewish men saying these awful things about us, and why are Jewish men—and women—laughing?

The jokes may be a window on the politics of sex between Jewish women and men. What follows are some questions and some speculations about Jewish women and men and sex. The answers aren't clear or simple.

There are two possibilities: the negative pictures of Jewish women in the jokes are either true, or they're not true. (Of course, in the great Jewish disputational tradition, there's always the lurking third possibility—maybe a little true, maybe a little not true.)

What's going on in the minds of Jewish men, the inventors of the stereotypes, the tellers of the jokes? One possibility, the Big Lie Theory, postulates that *Jewish women are no different sexually from other women, but that Jewish men have the need to malign our sexual "performance" in public.* Some of the reasons for the jokes, then, may be a general fear of women's sexuality, fear of and competition with non-Jewish men, and a (self-hating) wish to assimilate and rationalize it.

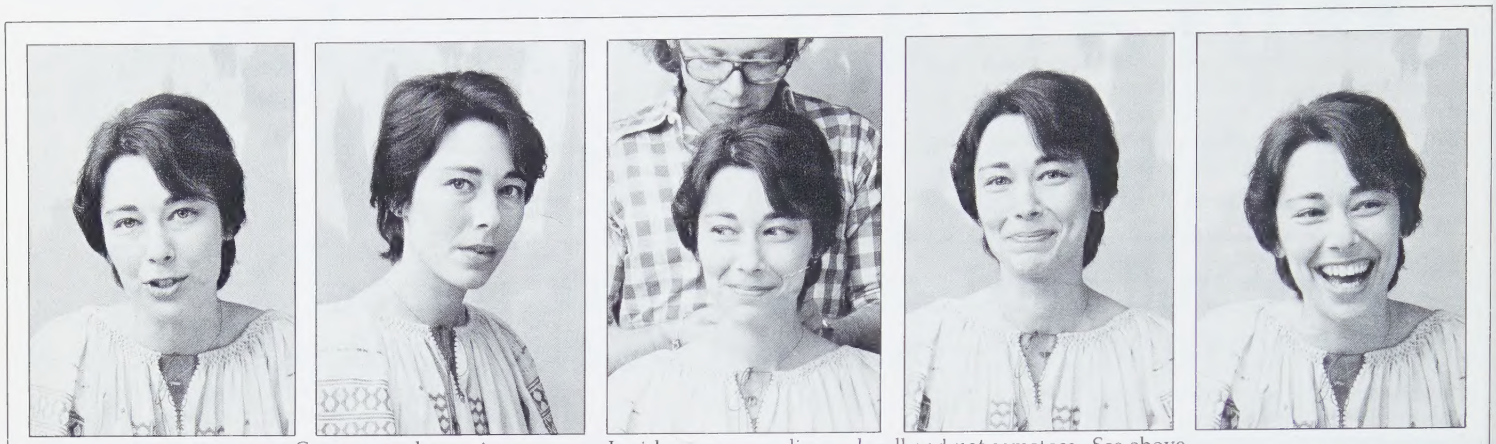
At the very least, the jokes reflect Jewish men's uneasiness about their relationships with Jewish women. If we're unresponsive, it means unresponsive to *them.* The very use of the word "unresponsive" suggests that the woman isn't expected to have any role in initiating sex. Mary Jane Sherfey, in *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality* speaks of women's insatiable sexuality as a physiological reality of which men are frightened. It may be that Jewish men portray us negatively because they are afraid that they can't satisfy this drive, and prefer to try to convince us that we're sexless rather than face any loss of "masculinity."

Jewish men are caught between trying to define and defend their manhood before Jewish women ("their"

Layle Silbert

Female modesty is not just a thing of the past but is vigilantly enforced today in the Mea Shearim section of Jerusalem and in other strictly religious Jewish communities. Perhaps even contemporary Jewish women are not as free as they think they are from the influence of these constraints.

Susan Weidman Schneider is Executive Editor of LILITH.



Contrary to the comic stereotype, Jewish women are alive and well and *not* comatose. See above.

women) and before non-Jewish men. Alexander Portnoy in the Turkish bath: "There are no women here. No women and no *goyim*. Can it be? There is nothing to worry about!"

If twentieth-century American Jewish men have memories of their strong mothers or foremothers, perhaps this also affects their attitude towards the women who are their contemporaries. They may fear the re-emergence of this strength in Jewish women, sexually and in other ways. They don't want competition from their women, they want (intelligent) support.

Jewish men, in their attempt to succeed American-style, compete with the handsome non-Jews who are the prototypical male sex objects in a culture where Jews are in a minority—where Robert Redford is sexier than Dustin Hoffman. In this competitive context, the jokes about sex may function as a beacon "warning" non-Jewish men that Jewish women aren't worth the trouble. The jokes become an attempt to keep the Jewish woman the exclusive property of the Jewish man who has claimed her. Oppressed men typically have no physical protection to offer their women against rape and abuse; historically, this was certainly true of the Jews. The jokes may be a perverse kind of protection, a barrier against the attentions of other men, a picket sign proclaiming "Don't Patronize These Premises. Lousy merchandise within."

The jokes about Jewish women may be an attempt by Jewish men to ingratiate themselves with their competitors ("the *goyim*"). Jokes about women bind men together—but it would be unthinkable for Jews to joke about WASP women, for example, so Jewish men tell "secrets" about a safer subject: their own women.

There's obviously a strong element of anti-Semitism here, too. The joke-tellers, and perhaps the audience too, want to distance themselves from Jewishness, but may not feel comfortable about doing this overtly. So both Jewish men and non-Jewish men get to denigrate the Jews in the guise of striking out "only" at Jewish women. The jokes may be a way of expressing anti-Jewish feelings under a mask of misogyny.

The alleged female disinterest in sex that provides an "excuse" for Jewish men to attack Jewishness also is used as one rationalization for intermarriage and assimilation. ("I'd *like* to marry a Jewish woman, but they're just no good in bed.") Making it with non-Jewish women is some men's way of entering mainstream America. To quote Portnoy again: "I don't seem to be sticking my dick up these girls as much as I stick it up their backgrounds—as though through fucking I will discover America. *Conquer* America."

In order to rationalize their choice of non-Jewish sexual partners, Jewish men may be trying to prove to themselves and to other men (and to Jewish women also, of course) that we are inferior sexual partners. The blame and/or the responsibility for *their* sexual choices rests with *us*!

Since there are no major studies of *Jewish* women's sexuality, we have no statistical data with which to confirm or refute the stereotypes about our sexual behavior. We can, however, examine the phenomena we see.

"What's the definition of a Jewish nymphomaniac?" "A woman who makes love once a year."

Let's look at the second possibility—that the Jewish woman is, indeed, sexually "unresponsive." This premise, which we shall call the Kernel-of-Truth Theory, suggests that *there may possibly be some reality behind the stereotype that Jewish women are less interested in sex than other women*—there may be something in our common backgrounds (our upbringing, experience, shared attitudes) that conditions us to being negative or hostile towards sex. The attitudes towards our own bodies that we Jews have learned and taught for centuries; our past and present family patterns; and, very importantly, the sexual politics of relations between Jewish men and Jewish women are all possible explanations for our alleged present-day sexual passivity.

Obviously, the lives of most Jews in America resemble the lives of other twentieth-century Americans more than they do the lives of our Jewish grandparents. But there are certain attitudes towards our bodies that may be definably "Jewish."

Jewish life for many centuries (probably at least for the past 2000 years of exile) has harbored a strong general bias against pleasurable physical activity for its own sake, both for men and for women. As the proverbial People of the Book, Jews have always been more at home (or thought they were expected to feel more at home) in their minds than in their bodies. Pleasure was supposed to have a purpose, and physical play was something that other people could afford to indulge in. Study and work meant survival. Play meant distraction from the battle for survival.

A revealing story is told of a boy in Eastern Europe who combed a horse every day for a year to collect in secret the horse's hairs, out of which he made a ball. One day his father found him bouncing the ball, and took it away from him, saying "Playing with balls is for the *goyim*."

Even in contemporary American Jewish families, where tennis or swimming may be encouraged, it is often with the idea that these are good for the child's physical development, rather than for the sheer fun involved. Even at summer camp, we expect our kids to learn something—Hebrew, folk dancing, soccer. (A New York radio commercial advertising a Jewish summer camp for girls mentions "*two* modern infirmaries"

ren before raving about its "Olympic-ze pool.")

As Jews necessarily obsessed with rvival, we've gotten the message that ır bodies aren't for fun. They can even a locus of danger, a kind of magnet for saster. ("Take me to a specialist!") The wish family's survival-insurance tactics ress, sensibly, "health" and "cleanliness" nd "caution." But this concern for hysical safety may place constraints on sexual expression.

Women's bodies were seen as especlly dangerous in the past because they ere thought to be a temptation luring en away from their study of holy books a specifically Jewish version of woman--temptress.

Judaism is mercifully free of much the real fear and loathing of sex found Stoic and ascetic Christian dogma, and e notion of Jewish celibacy is conemned. Sexual desire is recognized and n't associated with guilt; nevertheless, ere is a strong sense in Jewish writings the necessity for restraint regarding x.

Traditionally, safety from the evil oughts a woman's body might inspire as found only within the boundaries of arriage. And sex within marriage is very ell ordered in Jewish law, with suggested inimum daily requirements (or weekly monthly), depending upon the occupaon of the husband. Observant Jews day still follow the proscription against ny physical contact between a man and a oman during her menstrual period and r seven days after.

According to Jewish religious law nd custom, Jewish men have been harged with fulfilling their wives sexuly. Marital sex was the *duty* of the husand and the *privilege* of the wife. Even , "modesty" and restraint are stressed, nd some women were penalized for dissing their sexual activity openly. Leond Swidler, in *Women in Judaism*, points ut that in earlier times a woman could be vorced without recompense if she was oud-voiced"—which was interpreted to ean either that she "unashamedly deands sexual intercourse with her husand so someone can hear" or that she disputes intimate sexual matters this ay." The very fact that there was a echanism for punishing this behavior dicates that some women must have anted to make their desires known.

"How do you get a ewish woman to stop crewing?"

"Marry her."

Sex in marriage is what most of the jokes seem to be about. Our attitudes towards sex are certainly affected by our family relationships.

The nuclear family is a patriarchy in microcosm. In a patriarchy, men decide what's important, and women enable the men to do these "important" things—whether it's studying Talmud or Gray's *Anatomy*. The *baleboste* (classic Jewish housewife, off whose floors one could eat with impunity) is the "enabler" *par excellence*.

The Jewish woman has, in fact, been expected to be Superenabler: Superwife and Supermother combined. We take on ourselves all responsibility—and blame—for the daily functioning of the lives around us. We make the car pools run on time. Filling other people's needs, *pleasing others*, is how many Jewish women are supposed to fulfill themselves, at least once they're married or involved in adult relationships with men. Selfishness is sometimes expected or condoned in an unmarried Jewish female ("the apple of her father's eye"), but her own desires are to be subsumed to her husband's immediately after marriage.

An ideal adult role model, even for many contemporary Jewish women, is one of self-sacrifice. Jewish women have a double conditioning in this regard—as Jews, who are traditionally required to look out for one another, and as women, brought up to serve others.

Part of the self-sacrificing self-image of Jewish women is expressed in the maternal aspects of our lives. It's hard for any woman to fill mother and lover roles at the same time. Pauline Bart's breakthrough study of middle-aged Jewish women and depression, "Portnoy's Mother's Complaint," (reprinted in *Woman in Sexist Society* and elsewhere) shows that *Jewish* mothers have an unusually strong commitment to their children. When Jewish women in this study ranked their roles according to importance, "helping children" and "being a homemaker" were most often ranked first. No married woman listed "being companion to husband" first. Depressed Jewish women, at least, place more emphasis on their *obligations to others* than to any "merely self-gratifying activity"—which may be why they're depressed.

Self-sacrifice as the dominant mode of relating to our families may create the attitude that sex is another *obligation*, another worthy charity to which Jewish women must contribute.

Sometimes women are so concerned with being sexually desirable to others that we are out of touch with our own desires. In this situation we become more involved with the "other" than with what we are feeling. A satisfying sexual relationship has got to involve recognition of one's own needs, as well as those of the "other." A Jewish woman, for a variety of reasons, may feel as if she can have no legitimate "selfish" needs of her own (sexual and otherwise), or may feel guilty if these needs should surface. It may seem too risky to have needs if you're not sure they'll be met as devotedly as you meet the needs of others, especially within the family.

MAN TO EX-WIFE: "Let's make love one more time."

WOMAN: "Over my dead body."

MAN: "Isn't that how we always did it?"

Always giving other people what we think they want, while we seldom express our own desires, creates a lot of anger. But how to express this anger?

The notion that women must always provide sex for men "on demand" lest we otherwise bruise their fragile egos is a device whereby we *pretend* that we have power over them. In reality, *not* giving in may incur costs too great to bear, ranging from cold aggression to, at least, a general decline in domestic bliss. Conflict in the nuclear family is very threatening to women who have been told all their lives that having a husband and children are the greatest joys of womanhood. Marriage is woman's great rite of passage into adulthood. And, as Jews, we've been told often that the Jewish family is the atom, the smallest viable unit, of Jewish survival, and must be cherished. Jewish women therefore learn early to be strong and active ameliorators on the home front. Avoiding conflict, we repress or rearrange our own angry feelings for the sake of *"shalom bayit"*—peace in the home. And anger, especially repressed anger, may really blunt sexual feelings. The coma state, remember?

For women who do make demands or who may risk expressing their needs freely, there is another putdown. The stereotype of the Jewish American Princess is used by Jewish men (the Jewish American Princes) as a powerful warning to Jewish women: "if you assert yourself or show any selfishness, I will call you bad names." (Men are no fools. They want to control women, even if "only"

verbally.) Manhattan psychiatrist Helen Singer Kaplan reminds us that "men fail to see how hard it is for women to learn to be self-assertive." Especially so in this double-bind situation where women are attacked in the jokes as being passive, and slapped with the JAP tag if they express themselves.

"Why does a Jewish woman make love with her eyes closed?"

"Because she can't stand to see anyone else having a good time."

What are the politics of sex between Jewish men and Jewish women? Three historical components differentiate the sexual interactions of Jews from those of other groups.

One is that there is no romantic tradition in Judaism, no madonna figure to supply Jewish men with an appropriate object for "elevated" thoughts and feelings. An oppressed people, after all, can't afford too much in the way of fantasies about life on earth.

Another component is that there is a strong social tradition in Judaism, deriving from women's roles as enablers, that we must be primarily caregivers to our men rather than sex kittens. (No madonna, therefore no whore?)

A third factor is an overall emphasis on practicality in relations between the sexes, which diminishes the risk-taking associated with romantic love. While non-Jews, for example, also arranged their children's marriages and discouraged matches based on "love" alone, love and sex flourished outside of marriage anyway. Not so with Jews, at least as far as we can tell from Jewish writing. There was no tradition of courtly love, no glorification of the unattainable sex object, no praise for adultery. Sex was contained within marriage; love was something that a couple *learned* to feel. (Remember Tevye's wife saying, "For 25 years I've shared his bed, milked the cow, had his kids—if that's not love, what is?")

When Jews came to America and attempted to adopt American values, one of which was marrying for love, perhaps some of this practicality remained. Marriage is for the good of the family, the community. Jewish men and women are taught to see each other as "marriage material." In the 1950's, Marjorie Morningstar "outgrows" the passionate affair with the ne'er-do-well writer Noel Airman to settle down "happily" in Mamaroneck as Mrs. Milton Schwartz. Running around with "nobodies" is not good for the Jews.

Dale Bernstein, a New York feminist therapist, suggests that the intensive involvement Jewish mothers feel towards their children, especially the boys (mama knows which gender the culture values more!), is sometimes perceived by their sons as physically intrusive—e.g., Mrs. Portnoy's concern with Alexander's eating habits. When these sons seek emotional and sexual ties with women, they may fear the intensity of self-exposure that such a close relationship entails. Hence they may be attracted to "cooler," less-involving non-Jewish women.

Jewish women are perceived by Jewish men as "suffering more" (in the great Jewish tradition) over career goals, emotional involvements, parental attachments. Jewish women may actually perceive their lives as being more difficult than do other women; we are expected to do *everything* well: manage family, job, community involvement, kids. Many of us will feel guilty whatever the priorities we set for ourselves, since for many contemporary Jewish women there are real conflicts when traditional women's roles are at odds with what our good Jewish upbringing has taught us about making the best use of our "potential." These general conflicts inevitably express themselves in any domestic situation causing, in one man's words, "lots of hassles." Many Jewish men have described relationships with Jewish women as being difficult emotionally—partly because of the high expectations of the men, partly because of real conflicts in the women.

Jewish men and women typically have very high expectations of themselves and each other. After all, haven't we all been told that we should have only the best in life, or at least that we should do better than our parents did (regardless of how high that standard is)? The general culture, certainly in the last decade, has conditioned all Americans to believe that we ought to expect great sex, so this expectation is woven into the pattern of all the other things we American Jews expect from ourselves and from those we relate to.

In addition to all that great sex, Jewish men expect that Jewish women are going to provide what their selfless mothers provided: unconditional love, total approval. No wonder Jewish men may fear Jewish women—they expect more from them, and therefore have more to lose if the expectations are disappointed.

And how do Jewish women see Jewish men? As rule-bound mama's boys, always worried that there will be bones in the fish? That they'll conform to the roles of solid citizen and good provider, yet not be strong enough to bear any criticism at home? Are the jokes an attempt to create a Jewish macho to combat this image? ("Stop expecting me to be Mr. Nice Jewish Boy. I can be as mean and cruel and cool as other men.")

Our expectations of one another are limited and conservative. It's as if we want an indemnity against risk in our relationships. Can we outgrow this situation, move beyond the expectations and demands? Only if we begin to realize that we're entitled to all of our feelings, and that Jewish women do not have to be the great providers of nourishment and nurturance at all times and can have "needs" as well as "obligations."

And while we may recognize that there are certain assumptions about Jewish women's roles and their effect on sexuality that may hold true, we do not have to assume that they are true only for Jewish women. From the data in *The Hite Report*, for instance, it's clear that in the general population (most of which is not Jewish), many women are as unfulfilled in their sex lives as the jokes suggest Jewish women are. (Part of our oppression as a minority is that many kinds of idiosyncratic behavior are taken as characteristic of all Jews.)

Which brings us to the third possibility—that truth and falsehood can co-exist simultaneously in the jokes—suggesting that there may be genuine conflict between Jewish men and Jewish women; but the jokes don't define the problem, they just exacerbate it.

We've speculated on the underlying attitudes we have towards our own sexuality and towards one another, and these speculations lead us to conclude that these jokes are being told about the wrong subject, for the wrong reasons. Sexual problems don't usually occur because of mechanical failure. The jokes are a cop-out, pretending that the conflict is sexual when it's political. The jokes may be accurate in announcing: "conflict!" but they provide no understanding of the underlying disturbance.

Regardless, in fact, of their truth or falsehood, the jokes still must be viewed for what they are—anti-Semitic and misogynistic.

Our understanding of why Jewish men "need" to tell these jokes is no reason for us to dismiss our anger at the fact that they're telling them. We have understood all along how Jewish men are oppressed and how they act on this oppression.

It's no excuse. =

Special thanks to Aviva Cantor for editorial input well beyond the call of duty.

Beruriah: Her Word Became Law

by Leonard Swidler

Rabbi Simlai came before Rabbi Yohanan and requested: "Let the master teach me the Book of Genealogies... in three months." Thereupon Rabbi Yohanan took a clod of earth and threw it at him, saying: "Beruriah, wife of Rabbi Meir and daughter of Rabbi Hananyah ben Teradyon, who studied 300 laws from 300 teachers in one day, could nevertheless not do her duty in 3 years, yet you propose to do it in three months!" (bPesachim 62b)

Beruriah was the only woman in all of Talmudic literature* whose opinion became accepted as *halachah*, Jewish law. Rising above the limitations of her time and place—2nd century Eretz Israel where women were excluded from all public life—she became an avid student and devoted teacher of Torah, and a learned disputant of legal issues who was taken seriously in matters of Jewish law. Her reputation was so formidable that in the 9 stories about her (7 in the Babylonian Talmud, 2 in the Tosephta), she is held up as someone whose intellectuality and moral fervor are worthy of emulation.

We do not know precisely when Beruriah was born not when she died, but since her equally famous husband, Rabbi Meir, lived from around the beginning of the second century C.E. to 175, we can assume that Beruriah, too, was born somewhat after 100 C.E.

These were exceedingly trying times for Judaism. In 70 C.E., Roman legions

**The Talmud consists of the Mishnah and the Gemarah. The contents of the Mishnah—commentaries and debates on the Torah—were formulated beginning around 200 B.C.E., then collected, and codified by Rabbi Judah the Prince in 220 C.E. The Gemarah consists of debates, decisions and commentaries on the Mishnah plus* agada*—legends, stories and parables. These contents were memorized, then written down and collected into the Babylonian Talmud (referred to here by the prefix "b"), codified in 500 C.E.; and the Palestinian Talmud (referred to here by the prefix "p"), codified in 350 C.E. The Tosephta, another collection similar to the Mishnah, was codified in 200 C.E. Commentaries were written on the Talmud, the most popular one by Rashi (1030-1105 C.E.).*

Leonard Swidler, a professor in the Religion Department of Temple University and editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, *authored* Women in Judaism (*Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J., 1976*).

overwhelmed the first Jewish rebellion against the empire, destroyed the Temple and drove most Jews out of Jerusalem. While in 60 C.E. there were perhaps 2,500,000 Jews living in Eretz Israel, by 130, two years before the third (Bar Kochba) revolt against Rome (132-135 C.E.) began, their numbers were down to 1,500,000; in 135, after the revolt's defeat, the population was further reduced to 800,000.

After 135 C.E., Beruriah and her family moved to Tiberias, near the Sea of Galilee in northern Palestine. The Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious governing body) moved there, too—from Jamnia, near the coast west of Jerusalem, where it had been between 70 and 135. Perhaps Beruriah and Meir had lived in Jamnia as well for Meir had been a student of Akiva, the most renowned rabbi of his day, executed by the Romans for his role in the Bar Kochba rebellion.

After the crushing of this uprising, Beruriah's father, Rabbi Hananyah ben Teradyon, defied a Roman proscription against teaching Torah and was burned at the stake; her mother was also executed by the Romans; and her younger sister was shipped off to a brothel in Rome. The Talmud records, however, that at Beruriah's request, Meir travelled to Rome, bribed his way into the brothel, and rescued his as-yet-untouched sister-in-law (*bAvoda Zara 17b-18a*). For some time after the disaster of 135, Meir supported the family partly by copying Torah scrolls; after the death of Emperor Hadrian in 138, the Roman persecution was lifted and he was again able to teach Torah.

In the decades following the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis had consolidated the substitution of Torah study for Temple sacrifice as the central focus of Judaism. For this reason, Beruriah's becoming a student and teacher of Torah in this formative period for all Jewish history —sole female exception that she was—is so significant for women in Judaism.

Beruriah first became an avid student of Torah, although we do not know who taught her to read or with what rabbi she studied; perhaps she studied with her father and with other rabbis, too. Apparently, she went through the intensive three-year course of study customary for disciples of rabbis at that time, and, as the story involving Rabbi Simlai also shows, did so in such an exemplary manner that she was held up as a model of how to study Torah.

Indeed, Beruriah's reputation as an avid student was so great that it gave rise to legends about her studiousness, as in the clearly hyperbolic reference to the 300 laws studied with 300 teachers every day for 3 years. Such a legend was quite complimentary to her reputation and triply so when it is noted that Beruriah was being held up to be emulated by Rabbi Simlai, who was himself a very renowned rabbi—and that Rabbi Simlai lived over 100 years after Beruriah.

She also followed the path of all other really able students of Torah and became a teacher of Torah:

> **Beruriah once discovered a student who was studying in an undertone. Chiding him, she exclaimed: "Is it not written 'ordered in all things and sure?' If the Torah is 'ordered' in your 248 limbs, it will be 'sure,' otherwise it will not be sure." (bEruvin 53b)**

The then common mode of Torah study was to recite passages aloud to memorize them effectively. Here Beruriah not only drilled the student as a schoolteacher, but did so in a peculiarly rabbinic fashion: she quoted from the Torah and argued her position by explaining and applying the Scriptural passage. Her rebuke of the student was gentle; she tried to lead him more deeply into his studies. That this story about Beruriah is grouped with a number of other rabbinical stories about teaching indicates that the editors of the Babylonian Talmud were aware of her teaching prowess as late as the fifth century—300 years after her death.

Beruriah also participated in the discussions and debates among the rabbis and their more able disciples. In one such debate over a very technical matter of ritual purity, she opposed—and bested—her brother. In referring to Rabbi Hananyah ben Teradyon, Rabbi Judah ben Bava said, "His daughter has answered more correctly than his son" (*Tosephta Kelim BK 4,17*). In another debate, two rabbinical schools were ranged on opposite sides, whereupon Beruriah gave her solution. "When these words were said before Rabbi Judah, he commented: 'Beruriah has spoken rightly'" (*Tosephta Kelim BM 1,6*). The striking thing about these reports, and others elsewhere in the Talmud, is that a woman's opinion on Torah became law.

If Beruriah was a brilliant student, teacher and arbiter of Torah who lived an intensely moral life, did she not have all the qualities of a rabbi?—Rabbi, after all, was a title of respect meaning master or teacher, given to one expected to decide the law and live morally—yes, she did. But nowhere in the documents available to us is she referred to as "rabbi."

Presumably, she never received the *semichah* (ordination) to the rabbinate that promising young men normally received at the completion of their studies, which allowed the new rabbis to make religious and ritual judgments. During Beruriah's day there was apparently no legal reason why she could not have been ordained; the generally very low rabbinic estimate of women is the most likely reason (though with the documents available, we cannot know this for certain).

Beruriah would have been seen as an extraordinary woman at any time or place, but her exceptional quality rises exponentially when her accomplishments are viewed within the context of the intensely subordinate status of women in Mishnaic and Talmudic times (ca. 200 B.C.E. to 500 C.E.).

Basically, Jewish women were expected to be wives and mothers, to care for their husbands, children and homes. Although their freedom to move about in public varied from the countryside to the city (where it was more limited) and in various circumstances, it was clearly often quite restricted. For example, in Alexandria, with a large Jewish population center, wrote Philo (20 B.C.E.-50 C.E.): "Their women are kept in seclusion, never even approaching the outer doors, and their maidens are confined to the inner chambers; for modesty's sake (they) avoid the sight of men, even of their closest relations" (*Flaccus 89*).

This segregation of the women from the men also characterized religious life. In the Temple, destroyed only a few decades before Beruriah's birth, women (when not menstruating or in an otherwise "impure" condition) were limited to the outer court for Gentiles and the women's court. In the synagogues, women were also segregated, either behind a high wall, or into a separate room, and were not allowed to read from the Torah or take any other leadership role in the services: "A woman is not to come forward to read publicly from the Torah, out of respect for the community" (*bMegillah 23a; Tosephta Megillah 4,11*). Under these circumstances, of course, a woman could not be counted toward the *minyan* (quorum necessary for communal worship) although an infant boy or a male slave might be (*Mishnah Avot 3,6; bBerachot 47b*).

There are several rabbinic statements recorded from the first to fifth centuries which praise and value a good wife; for example, "Who is wealthy?... He who has a wife comely in deeds" (*bShabbat 25b*). But far more typical of the scores of negative rabbinic comments about women are the following:

"When a boy comes into the world peace comes into the world.... When a girl comes, nothing comes..." (*bNiddah 31b*).

"Women are light-headed" (*bShabbat 33b; bKiddushin 80b*).

"The most virtuous of women is a witch" (*Mishnah Terum 15*).

"Woman is a pitcher full of filth with its mouth full of blood, yet all run after her" (*bShabbat 152a*).

The early rabbinic attitudes are perhaps best summed up in the prayer "Praised be God that He has not created me a woman" (recorded in the *Tosephta, Berachot, 7,18; pBerachot 13b;* and *bMenachot 43b*).

As for the study of Torah, the very center of Jewish life, the deciding opinion in a dispute over whether women could study, stated: "If any man teach his daughter Torah, it is as though he taught her lechery" (*Mishnah Sotah 3,4*). Rather, women should "have their *sons* taught Scripture and Mishnah and wait for their husbands until they return from the schools" (*bShabbat 21a*). Rabbi Eliezer (ca. 90) said: "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman" (*pSotah 3,19a*). Women of Talmudic times did not venture into the heart of Judaism, the study of Torah—with one exception, Beruriah.

It is interesting to note that in virtually all the stories recorded about Beruriah, she is always pitted against a man. Moreover, she is always superior to the man or men, whether as a model of studiousness, a more devoted teacher, or as a better and even at times a triumphant disputant. This is the case even in regard to her husband, the most learned and renowned rabbi of the age.

If there was anything Beruriah could not tolerate, it was a man being pretentious about Torah:

A certain min (a Sadducee opponent of the Pharisees or a Jewish-Christian) said to Beruriah: "It is written: 'Sing, O barren one, you who did not bear.' Because she did not bear, she should sing?" She said to him: "Fool! Look at the end of the verse where it is written, For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.' Rather, what is the meaning of 'Oh, barren, you did not bear'? Sing, oh, community of Israel, who resembles a barren woman, for not having borne children like you, who are damned to hell."

Beruriah clearly did not suffer fools gladly, as this story, and another one below about Rabbi Yossi the Galilean, indicate. She could be extremely sympathetic and sensitive to those she felt were sincere. But here she faced a man who was expounding Scripture in an ignorant way and who she thought was helping to destroy true Judaism.

Beruriah's intense moral fervor and sensitive concern for people emerges in this story about her and Rabbi Meir:

Certain highwaymen living in the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir annoyed him greatly and he prayed for them to die. His wife Beruriah said to him: "What is your view? Is it because it is written, 'Let the sinners be consumed'? Is 'sinners' written? (No,) 'sins' is written. Moreover, look at the end of the verse: 'And let the wicked be no more.' Since the sins will cease, the wicked will be no more." He prayed for them and they repented. (bBerachot 10a)

Hers was clearly high moral advice, presented with the usual Scriptural quotation, analysis and application of its meaning. Beruriah here showed herself superior to the best male rabbinical mind and moral spirit; the clear proof of this is that Rabbi Meir took her advice, with success.

Beruriah appears in the pages of rabbinic writings as a person who lived a very full human life with perhaps more than her measure of suffering. Not only was hers the time of the destruction of the Jewish homeland by the Romans; not only did she lose her father and mother in the Hadrianic persecutions and have her sister forced into a brothel; but her brother disgraced the family by turning to banditry and was subsequently murdered by his gang for trying to inform on them.However, perhaps the greatest tragedy of her life was the death of two of her sons. Her endurance and response to their sudden death is related in this story:

When two of their sons died on the Shabbat, Beruriah did not inform Meir of (this) upon his return from the academy in order not to grieve him on the Shabbat. Only after the Havdalah (farewell to the Shabbat) prayer did she broach the matter saying: "Some time ago, a certain man came and left something in my trust; now he has called for it. Shall I return it to him or not?" Naturally, Meir replied in the affirmative, whereupon Beruriah showed him their dead children. When Meir began to weep, she asked: "Did you not tell me that we must give back what is given on trust? 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.' " (Midrash Proverbs 30:10)

In the midst of extraordinary suffering, Beruriah's rabbinic style comes to the fore once again, as she tells a story and applies it to the present situation with a quotation from Scripture. Moreover, the stereotypical sex roles are reversed here as the strong Beruriah takes the more intellectual approach, while Rabbi Meir weeps.

Clearly, Beruriah did not fit the female stereotype of her day. But more than that, her consciousness of the oppressed position women had in the Jewish society around her was extremely sensitized, and she struck out against this subordinate status.

Beruriah knew that Rabbi Yossi ben Yohanan was recorded as saying (ca. 150 B.C.E.): "Talk not much with womankind" and that 200 years later the following was added: "This they said of a man's own wife; how much more of his fellow's wife! Hence the Sages have said: 'He who talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and will at the last inherit Gehenna (hell)" (*Mishnah Avot 1,5*). This was the background for another Talmudic story about Beruriah:

Rabbi Yossi the Galilean was once on a journey when he met Beruriah. "By what road," he asked her, "do we go to Lydda?" "Foolish Galilean," she replied. "Did not the Sages say, 'Engage not in much talk with women'? You should have asked, 'By which to Lydda? ' " (bEruvin 53a)

What Beruriah was reacting to was woman's second-class status, reflected in the rabbinic statements that men shouldn't talk too much with women, they were too "lightheaded" to waste time on, and sexually tempting besides. Here was a chance to throw verbal acid in the face of one of the denigrators of womankind. (One wonders if he had earlier delivered himself of some pompous sage quotation on the frivolity and inferiority of women to have earned this attack.)

A student she treated gently; the rabbi she called a fool. But with her keen wit, she did not simply vituperate him. Instead, she carefully followed the traditional rabbinic pattern of disputation by rebutting a statement with a quotation from the Law. Always she remained the intellectual. What a weight Beruriah's

reputation must have had in Talmudic times for this vitriolic putdown of a rabbi to be noted, remembered for hundreds of years, and given permanence in the final redaction of the Talmud.

That there was obviously some discomfort among the rabbis of the Talmudic era is reflected only in a shadowy fashion in the last line of the story about Rabbi Meir's rescue of Beruriah's sister. There was some backlash to his efforts and "He then arose and ran away and came to Babylon; other say because of the incident about Beruriah" (*bAvoda Zara 18a*). No further information about the "incident" is given in the Talmud; there is merely this ominous reference.

By one thousand years later, we find a full-blown legend about this "incident" in the Talmudic commentary by Rashi, the famous medieval scholar, on that passage:

Beruriah once again made fun of the saying of the Sages that women are light-headed. Then Meir said to her: "With your life you will have to take back your words." He sent one of his students to test her, to see if she would allow herself to be seduced. He sat by her the whole day until she surrendered herself to him. When she realized (what she had done), she strangled herself. Then Rabbi Meir ran away on account of the scandal.

There is nothing in the intelligence, perceptivity and moral character of Beruriah to make this story credible in any way. Would she not have perceived that her husband had set a trap for her? Is it not inconceivable that the great Rabbi Meir could have commissioned his rabbinical student to commit one of the deadly sins in its most serious form—sexual immorality with a married Jewish woman? Finally, why would it take almost 1,000 years for this story, so out of character with all the previously known documentation, to surface?

Clearly, the story was invented simply to morally annihilate Beruriah, the one woman of superior stature in the Talmud, Beruriah the feminist—for it is precisely on this point—of resistance to the subordination of women—that she was attacked. The moral destruction planned for her would reduce her to the female stereotype, a weak sexual creature who could not resist a determined Don Juan. Because she took an overtly feminist stance of rejecting the rabbinic stereotyping of women as intellectually inferior, she was told she would have to give up her life. Feminism was a capital crime!

Despite the historical bankruptcy of this late legend, it does underline Beruriah's towering reputation in her lifetime and for centuries afterwards: the very attempt to destroy it is evidence of its power. Although the opposition was already there in Talmudic times, as is seen in the innuendo about the "incident" (unless this phrase was spuriously interpolated into the manuscripts later on), the subsequent hatchet job suggests that the enemies of what she stood for grew stronger in time.

Fortunately, the character assassination attempt was far from completely successful, for the clearly historically-based evidence of the earlier Talmudic stories remains today. A strong and positive image of Beruriah comes through even the totally male-oriented, male-written and male-edited rabbinic materials.

The fact that the Talmudic evidence was not erased not only witnesses to the vigorous reputation of Beruriah, but also to the faithful honesty of the generations of rabbis who memorized, handed on and finally wrote down, collected and edited the stories about her. This also means, unfortunately, that there were no other women then who entered and advanced into the heartland of Judaism—the study of Torah—otherwise we would have Talmudic stories about them as well.

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Gentlemen's Agreement at the Seminary

by Amy Stone

Myra Alperson

Insider's view of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the one institution ordaining Conservative rabbis.

For the past four years, ever since she was a freshman at Berkeley, Sandy Levine has been attempting to apply to the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Although the Seminary's catalogue does not specify "men only," she was informed that "the present policy of the Rabbinical School is to admit only male candidates" and advised to apply to one of the Seminary's other graduate programs.

Since then, she has been trying to pin down the reasons behind the Seminary's refusal to ordain women rabbis. Chancellor Gerson Cohen wrote to her of his "personal anguish" at the many letters from "talented and committed young Jewish women who feel that they have been deprived of the right to fulfill themselves fully as Jews because of the Seminary's current policy against the ordination of women." Sandy Levine's response was to wonder just how many other women share her frustration at not being able to enter the Conservative rabbinate.

She herself had wanted to become a rabbi ever since she was a rabbi for her junior congregation. As a youngster, the family's Conservative synagogue was her home away from home, and it was perfectly normal for women in the congregation to wear tallises and read from the Torah.

It wasn't until much later that Sandy Levine found out that this upstate New York synagogue was unusual among Conservative congregations. And it was not until she attempted to apply to the Seminary's Rabbinical School that she found out that it was impossible for her to become a rabbinical student.

Ironically, as the Seminary's Rabbinical School continues to turn away women attempting to apply, it has simultaneously mounted a full-scale recruitment effort for suitable male students. Since the Seminary has a monopoly on the ordination of Conservative rabbis, and since more than 100 Conservative synagogues are in need of rabbis, the 20 or so students ordained each year only partially fill the need.

Sandy Levine and other Conservative women seeking to become rabbis have grounds for concern. Not only is the Jewish Theological Seminary the only place they can be ordained as Conservative rabbis, but, beyond that, the Seminary is not just the academic arm of Conservative Judaism. In its own estimation and that of others, it is "the fountainhead of Conservative Judaism."

Compared with the other institutions of Conservative Judaism—the Rabbinical Assembly, which is the international organization of Conservative rabbis, and the United Synagogue of America, the congregational organization—the Seminary has the seniority and the prestige. The Seminary is sheltered from pressure from the other two institutions thanks to the gentlemen's agreement that one body of Conservative Judaism does not make decisions affecting another. Within the Seminary, the gentlemen making policy decisions have their own agreements, and there is definite agreement that now is not the time to allow women to become rabbinical students at the Seminary.

Although critics see "a tremendous gap between the Seminary and the rest of the world" and even some within the Seminary find it "a very unsupportive place," these same people feel it is the outstanding institution for the study of Jewish texts and that it is unfair to women who want to become rabbis not to have the opportunity to be ordained at the Seminary.

Those at "the fountainhead of Conservative Judaism," the faculty members, fear such a move's effect on the community. By community they mean the Seminary, Conservative Jews, and, by extension, all of Judaism since Conservative Jews are the largest group in America, claiming 51 percent of all affiliated Jews, with some 1.5 million congregants in 830 synagogues (as compared to 1.1 million Reform congregants in 720 synagogues at last count).

There's the carefully maintained fabric of the Seminary community—the distinguished scholars along with the rest of the faculty, administration, and, to a lesser degree, the students enrolled in the various schools of the Seminary (the undergraduate Seminary College of Jewish Studies-Teachers Institute, the Cantors Institute-Seminary College of Jewish Music, the Rabbinical School, and the Graduate School). Including the Seminary's University of Judaism in Los Angeles and the Jerusalem Center, the Jewish Theological Seminary has 150 faculty members and some 900 students.

Change does take place at the fountainhead, but only in a manner which the Seminary leadership considers appropriate, and any bending to outside agitation is considered distinctly inappropriate.

The symbol of the Seminary is not its great iron gates, which have long

Amy Stone is Senior Editor of LILITH.

opened for both men and women, but the Seminary synagogue. It is sublimely reactionary, with its separate seating for men and women and its refusal to allow women to read from the Torah during services or count in the *minyan* needed for communal prayer, despite the decision by the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards that it was permissible for women to do both.

Women's struggles to enter the Seminary started with Henrietta Szold back in 1903. In order to attend classes, Szold had to obtain permission from every member of the Seminary board. Although the gentlemen allowed her to study, they had their doubts. As board member Mayer Sulzberger wrote Szold: "A leisurely stroll in the open air of about two hours a day.... might have uses... more beneficial than rabbinics."

The Seminary now allows women to obtain all degrees except those of rabbi and cantor. The last great debate on the question of ordaining women at the Seminary took place in January and February, 1973. Gerson Cohen had recently become Chancellor and wanted to be "guided" by the Rabbinical Department faculty on the issue of women applicants for ordination. Among the women attempting to apply was Susannah Heschel, daughter of Abraham Joshua Heschel, distinguished theologian and Professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism at the Seminary for 27 years. The consensus was "very obviously against admitting women to ordination at this time," according to Rabbi David Kogen, Chairman of the Department of Practical Rabbinics and Director of the Cantors Institute-Seminary College of Jewish Music. Kogen said, "I doubt very much if it will come up for a full-dress debate in the very near future. There have been few changes in the line-up of opinion."

Martin Kharrazi

Sandy Levine helping student prepare for *Bat Mitzvah*. She sees herself as well within the traditional view of rabbi as teacher.

Women applicants such as Sandy Levine trying to understand the reasoning behind the decision are told by the Rabbinical Department Director of Admissions, Baruch Feldstern: "I am sure that you are aware of the tension between tradition and change which constitutes one of the hallmarks of Conservative Judaism."

It is not surprising that the reasons for not ordaining women remain elusive since the only overall grounds for agreement among the mostly male faculty is that Jewish history is long and the Seminary should not rush into such a decision. The aversion to women becoming rabbis is justified on various *halachic*, sociological, psychological and political grounds.

Not even those opposed to admitting women rabbinical students agree that Jewish law is the major barrier. According to the Chairman of the Department of Talmud and Rabbinics, David Weiss Halivni, who presented the paper opposing the ordination of women in the 1973 debate, "The only real *halachic* problems would be marriage and divorce, since women cannot be witnesses in ritual matters." Although Halivni comes from a European Orthodox background, was ordained at a Rumanian yeshiva, and is against the idea of women rabbis, he is ready to play with the idea, mentioning the Talmudic precedents for women putting on *tefillin*. (He considers the *halachic* grounds for women not becoming cantors much more clear-cut, specifically that anyone not obligated to fulfill time-bound commandments cannot be the *shaliach tzibur*, the representative of the community reading from the actual Torah scrolls.)

Rabbi Kogen described grappling with the problem of women who want ordination as akin to the challenge of the Yiddish expression "The lamb should be safe while the wolf is well-fed." In fact, Kogen suggested that one possible compromise would be the creation of different degrees of ordination, so that a woman would be allowed to preach and teach as a rabbi but not have the full degree of rabbi. Though with the full title of rabbi available to women through Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism, Kogen doubted that women would want the lesser degree from Conservative Judaism.

"I want as much as possible for women to have equal rights," Kogen said. "They ought to be treated like human beings. But I don't want to rip apart the Jewish people. We're a small enough people as it is."

For many at the Seminary, it's a case of concern over what Orthodox Jews will think, and that they will discount Conservative ritual acts performed by a woman.

The response to these arguments from Instructor in Talmud Judith Hauptman, the first woman to teach Talmud at the Seminary, is that "These laws today are unfair. Change them, or have two other witnesses at weddings in addition to the woman rabbi. 'Rabbi' means teacher, that the person has attained a certain level of education."

In fact, a rabbi is, strictly speaking, a teacher, and even the role of arbiter is not inherent. At weddings, the rabbi's responsibility under Jewish law is to be sure that everything is done properly and that the two witnesses are kosher. The rabbi's role in divorce is as a member of a rabbinical court granting the divorce, and under Jewish law a woman cannot be a judge or witness.

One of the faculty members considered an important ally in efforts to admit women rabbinical students is Seymour Siegel, Professor of Theology and Ethics and Chairman of the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards. Siegel sees no *halachic* reason barring women from the rabbinate: "Personally," —and he emphasized the "personally"—"I am in favor of ordaining women. If we keep preaching all the time that a rabbi is not a recipient of special gifts from heaven, doesn't dispense sacraments, is the teacher of the community, its leader, has no special ritual status, it seems clear to me that a woman can fulfill these functions in the same way that men do." Siegel presented the 1973 paper in favor of admitting women rabbinical students and is spending his sabbatical at the Kennedy Institute for Bioethics concerned with the Jewish view on bioethical questions.

The oral tradition has it that distinguished faculty members would resign if the Seminary started ordaining women. The men most often mentioned in this connection are Saul Lieberman, the Seminary's most distinguished Talmud scholar, Rector of the Rabbinical School and rabbi of the Seminary synagogue; and Louis Finkelstein, President of the Seminary for 32 years, Chancellor before Gerson

Cohen, and now Chancellor Emeritus. Lieberman said he did not wish to discuss the issue, and Finkelstein's assistant told this reporter that he was too busy with his research for interviews.

But faculty members attuned to the subtle process of change at the Seminary doubt that any major change would occur in a manner causing leading faculty members to resign. One scholar, who preferred not to be named, feels that the last male bastion was broken when a woman entered Lieberman's Talmud class. The breakthrough was quietly negotiated by Judith Hauptman, the first woman in the Seminary's master's program in Talmud, who was, in the words of this source, "so bright, Lieberman couldn't turn her down."

The second major breakthrough came with Chancellor Cohen's uncluttering of the Seminary's course offerings so that all overlapping courses in different departments were eliminated by the 1974-75 academic year. Seminary students were allowed to take any course in any department at their appropriate academic level. One major byproduct was that every course in the Seminary was open to women. Hauptman wonders, "How would women rabbinical students change the faculty members' lives? They're already teaching women. So these faculty members wouldn't come to their ordination. How else would it affect the Seminary?"

Apparently, most of the faculty feel such a change would be bad for the Seminary since it is not just a few elderly and powerful faculty members who oppose admitting women as rabbinical students. It is the majority of the Seminary faculty, young, old, male—and female, with the Bible and Talmud department the most conservative-with-a-small-"c." Some see the Seminary's growing number of American-born faculty members as more open to change than their older, European-born colleagues.

Professor Robert Gordis, a noted Biblical scholar, Seminary gadfly, and one of the few faculty members who has written in favor of women rabbis, disagrees: "Very often, the young faculty members are more right-wing than the older faculty."

Gordon Tucker is a 25-year-old Instructor in Philosophies of Judaism and Assistant to the Chancellor. He was ordained by the Seminary two years ago and is a member of the Rabbinical Assembly's Membership Committee. On the wall of his office is a dart board. On his desk is a copy of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

Tucker speaks of "the psychological dimension of the father figure" and says, "If present sociological conditions make a woman rabbi 'peculiar' to most people on a subconscious level, if society is repelled by a matter of form, this gets in the way of fostering spiritual growth. I think it's unfortunate, but I feel a certain responsibility to something more than my own proclivities. The best of all possible worlds right now would be to have women admitted to the Rabbinical School but not ordained."

Tucker seems to have absorbed the wisdom of the Seminary's Chairman of the Department of Pastoral Psychiatry, Mortimer Ostow. Speaking on "Women and Change in Jewish Law" three years ago at the Rabbinical Assembly Pastoral Psychiatry Conference, Ostow said, "Among the men who will oppose the presence of women on the *bimah* will be many who fear that a menstruating woman will contaminate them and the sacred objects on the *bimah*, especially the Torah. Others... will be awed and humiliated by the woman whose competence in religious matters clearly exceeds their own. While such men will not be challenged directly in a sexual encounter with these dangerous and powerful women, their self-esteem within the community in which they live will be shaken, as will their confidence in their own

vitality. And so an important prop to their mental stability will be removed."

Gordis sees in the JTS policy of excluding women rabbinical students "some degree of male chauvinism and the general feeling that women's roles is not to be in the forefront, that second-rate status for women is good for the Jews and good for the world. Ultimately there is going to be a shift in climate. It's part of a moving glacier." Gordis has the perspective of time on the Seminary scene. Besides holding two chairs as Professor of Bible and Philosophies of Religion, he is a member of the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards and was President of the Rabbinical Assembly in the 1940's.

Many of the women in the Seminary faculty and administration agree with the men opposed to ordaining women, and those who favor women rabbis keep a low profile. Among the women who find the idea of women rabbis unacceptable is the first woman hired by the Cantors Institute-Seminary College of Jewish Music 23 years ago, Professor Johanna Spector. Spector, who heads the Department of Ethnomusicology and was the first person to put Jewish musicology on the map, said, "I was brought up in a man's world, and I really think like a man in many respects. I doubt that I would accept a woman rabbi in my congregation. It has nothing to do with the talent of the woman. Women throughout history in all religions have played a very inferior role."

Even those not opposed are cautious. Sylvia Ettenberg, the first woman registrar at the Seminary College 30 years ago, organizer of the first Ramah camps, and current Dean of Educational Development, feels, "There has to be a climate of acceptance for the Rabbinical School to accept women. I'm not ready to lead a crusade." As for her own career, she said, "I was fairly comfortable here as a woman. I never felt mistreated as a woman. Probably that was because I was not in the Rabbinical Department."

Judith Hauptman advises women to enter the Seminary as graduate students, then, on their own, complete all the courses required for ordination—the Master of Arts in rabbinics, which takes rabbinical students one to three years to complete, followed by the Graduate Rabbinical School program for ordination, which takes an additional three years. A woman will then be able to "step forward with her transcript in 10 to 15 years when a majority of the faculty agrees to ordain women. She just can't have a pulpit now," Hauptman said. She is afraid that if women interested in entering the Rabbinical School "sit around waiting 10 to 15 years, they won't come back when it's okay for women to be rabbis."

Other faculty members in favor of women rabbis believe that the direct approach of women attempting to apply to the Rabbinical School simply by writing for applications is no way to create a test case. They suggest that a well-qualified applicant would do well to get as many faculty members and prominent rabbis as possible to sponsor her and to accompany the application with some well-timed publicity in Jewish newspapers. Both Professors Siegel and Gordis say they are willing to sponsor a woman candidate if she is qualified in all other ways, although Siegel said, "Knowing the make-up of the faculty at this time, she couldn't make it."

But even those men and women faculty members most in favor of ordaining rabbis do not want to push for change. For one thing, with a majority of the faculty so solidly opposed, it would be political folly. The one person in a position to lead such a move is the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Gerson Cohen. A scholar in the field of Jewish history, Cohen is seen by many faculty members as a religious liberal who's become increasingly conservative in office.

Shortly before he became Chancellor in 1972, Cohen told *The New York Times*, "I, for one, would urge serious consideration if a woman applies (to the Rabbinical Department) who has qualified academically, characterologically and religiously, and I would urge the faculty and my colleagues in the Rabbinical Assembly to consider it."

The next year as Chancellor, Cohen wrote in *Women's League Outlook*: "... anyone who has considered the matter dispassionately will concede that admitting her (an applicant) to candidacy for ordination *at this time* (Cohen's italics) would hardly reflect the consensus of the Conservative Movement, whether of its laity or its professional leadership..." And in words akin to Mortimer Ostow's thinking, the Chancellor concluded: "Will the ordaining of women be a step toward deepening and strengthening religious commitment, or will it be a concession to the current wave of sexual homogenization [in popular terms, unisex; in plain English, homosexualization] that seems to have invaded every corner of contemporary life?"

The Chancellor's current position on the Seminary's ordaining women is: "For the present and foreseeable future, no."

In fact, when recently reminded at an informal meeting of rabbinical students that a few years ago he had said that he thought women would be admitted to the Rabbinical School in a few years, the Chancellor answered that women will not be admitted during his lifetime. As if to emphasize his current stand, at an informal meeting with Seminary graduate students, Cohen said that admitting women rabbinical students would cost the Seminary $2 million.

When interviewed, at the mention of the statement by the Rabbinical School Director of Admissions about "the tension between tradition and change," the Chancellor flew into a rage, saying, "I'm not committed to any change whatsoever. I'm committed to exegetical development." In fact, for members of the Seminary faculty and administration, any tension between tradition and change is experienced with exquisite sensibilities. Even the subtlest change registers as an earthquake on the Seminary Richter scale.

Myra Alperson

The secluded inner courtyard of the Seminary is in keeping with the institution's aloofness from current changes in Judaism, even those within the Conservative movement.

The fact that women were allowed to have their own parade of Torahs and read from the Torah in their own *minyan* at the Seminary synagogue last Simchat Torah is considered a revolution, even though it is entirely acceptable under Jewish law. The fact that, since January, student services in the Mathilde Schechter dorm allow women to read from the Torah although they are still not allowed to count in the *minyan* or lead the service is viewed as a daring development for the Seminary.

To women such as Sandy Levine who are seeking to enter the Rabbinical School, the Chancellor is a frustrating enigma. Another woman who attempted to apply to the Rabbinical School shortly before the 1973 great debate feels that she was "led on" by Cohen, who encouraged her to try applying. Her preliminary application was eventually rejected with the explanation that her Talmud background was weak. She considered this a ploy since, she said, "A man with an equally weak background would be accepted. The Rabbinical School has a very strong *mechinah* (preparatory) program, an intensive, tough one-year program where they take people who can't put two words of Hebrew together and push them through 25 pages of Talmud." In fact, one rabbinical student estimated that a quarter of his class had been through the *mechinah* program.

People close to the scene feel that the Chancellor is playing politics. In the words of one faculty member, "Cohen's feeling that it's not judicious at this time means that more faculty members would be displeased than pleased if women were ordained. He's not willing to be a leader."

The debate over whether to admit women rabbinical students may finally be spreading to the Seminary's own board of directors. While most of the board members are elderly, genteel and not about to start a revolution, the board's only woman, Peggy Tishman, feels the policy of not ordaining women is "totally wrong, archaic, anachronistic and—unfortunate." Tishman is a woman highly respected for her work as director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and cabinet member of the UJA-New York Federation Combined Campaign, of which she is past chairman. She is married to Alan V. Tishman of Tishman Realty.

Tishman, now in her third year on the Seminary board, said, "I don't consider myself a feminist. I consider myself a civil libertarian. It just doesn't make sense to exclude women. I get the funny feeling that Gerson Cohen feels exactly the same way. Maybe he just doesn't know how to get started." At least one other board member, Laurence Tisch, chairman of the Loew's theater and hotel corporate empire, favors admitting women rabbinical students and wants the board to discuss the issue.

Meanwhile, as if to counter Peggy Tishman's optimism concerning change, it was reported that Cohen had seriously considered presenting a personal resolution at this year's Rabbinical Assembly convention which would have forbidden Rabbinical Assembly membership to anyone not qualifying for admission to the Seminary Rabbinical School, *i.e.* women.

The debate over whether to allow women to become Conservative rabbis is becoming increasingly intense within the Rabbinical Assembly. And although at least in theory one arm of the Conservative movement does not tell the others what to do, as one Seminary faculty member said, "There is always a tug and pull between the RA and the Seminary" and as Professor Gordis put it, "It would be a bit of an embarrassment to the Seminary if the RA votes for women."

Back in 1975, Rabbi Mordecai Waxman said in his presidential address opening the Rabbinical Assembly Convention that "the question of entry of women into the Conservative rabbinate is not a question of whether, but when."

Even without an actual female candidate, the issue of women rabbis has already touched off additional conflicts. There is resentment at the breaking of the gentlemen's agreement that one arm of Conservative Judaism does not bring up resolutions affecting another, and there is outrage at the possibility of private ordination of a woman rabbi.

In May, at this year's Rabbinical Assembly annual convention, a resolution encouraging the Seminary to admit women to the Rabbinical School plus directing the Rabbinical Assembly's Membership Committee to consider qualified candidates regardless of sex was finally tabled after lengthy debate. As a compromise at a midnight session, the convention established a commission to study all aspects of the role of women as spiritual leaders in the Conservative movement. Chancellor Cohen agreed to form the study group and accept the findings "only if all activity is suspended for two years, so our faculty will not be exploded."

(One indicator of how the Seminary's rabbinical students now feel, is that just before the Rabbinical Assembly convention, 43 of the 103 rabbinical students signed a petition in favor of the resolution to admit women to Rabbinical Assembly membership and the Seminary rabbinical school. The petition was presented to the Seminary, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue.)

Bill Ashe

Lynn Gottlieb is already serving as rabbi to the deaf. By seeking private ordination, she may become Conservative Judaism's first woman rabbi

Meanwhile, adding to the complexity of the debate, Wolfe Kelman, the Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Assembly and a member of the Seminary faculty, has agreed to be one of three rabbis privately ordaining a woman who is currently pursuing rabbinical studies with a Conservative rabbi.

As if the specter of rabbis being ordained outside the Seminary walls weren't enough, this woman, Lynn Gottlieb, hardly fits the image of the sedately conservative Conservative rabbi. Besides serving as rabbi for the deaf and creating her own Jewish liturgical sign language, Gottlieb is founder and dancer in what is probably the only Jewish feminist dance group, Bat Kol. She has studied in Israel at the Hebrew University and at the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College and is now studying at the Seminary. Gottlieb says, "People personally involved in the issue, like myself, have to have courage. It's a case of the disenfranchised, powerless group having to depend on the people in power."

While opinion within the Rabbinical Assembly varies on whether to admit a woman rabbi, the idea of Conservative

rabbis independently ordaining new rabbis—male or female—is disapproved of almost unanimously. Seminary and Rabbinical Assembly members are furious. Former President of the Rabbinical Assembly Waxman feels, "Kelman in his official position should not be doing this. He has no right to commit the RA to this."

Even Kelman says, "Lynn would have made life a lot easier if she'd been ordained by HUC (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion ordains Reform rabbis). A lot of people feel private ordination is wrong, including myself. The question is, shall we make an exception."

In any case, one result of Chancellor Cohen's cutting off "all activity" concerning women rabbis during the next two years while his commission studies the issue, is that Lynn Gottlieb cannot be ordained for two years.

While there is a tremendous spread of opinion among the 1,000 members of the Rabbinical Assembly—the majority of whom have been ordained at the Seminary but some of whom come from Orthodox yeshivas and the Reform rabbinical school—the current best bet is that the Rabbinical Assembly will admit women before the Seminary Rabbinical School does. A recent questionnaire sent to all members by the Queens, New York region of the Rabbinical Assembly indicated that 53 percent favored admitting women to the Rabbinical Assembly. This was based on an unusually large response of 570 from an international mailing of 1,000 questionnaires.

Obviously no real test can take place till a woman rabbi applies to the Rabbinical Assembly. So far none of the handful of Reconstructionist or Reform women rabbis have been interested, but at least two of the women turned down by the Seminary Rabbinical School and now studying to become Reform rabbis are interested in applying for membership in the Rabbinical Assembly. This would still put the first test case four years away since these women have two more years of study before they are ordained, and the Rabbinical Assembly requires two years of pulpit service or other work by ordained rabbis before they can apply for Rabbinical Assembly membership. (Currently, rabbis ordained by the Seminary automatically become associate members of the Rabbinical Assembly, but as of next year, associate membership will be dropped and Seminary graduates will also have to serve as rabbis for two years before applying.)

Women trying to bring community pressure to bear on the Seminary know they can't expect any support from the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, the organization of the Conservative movement's sisterhoods. Since the League raises a major part of the Seminary budget—$1.2 million of the current $6.5 million budget—women seeking ways of opening up the Rabbinical School would like to see the Women's League withhold its financial support until the Seminary agrees to ordain women.

In fact, the leadership of the Women's League would not consider such a thing. In the words of Ruth Perry, National President of Women's League, "*Our* people don't support the Seminary conditionally. They recognize that the Seminary contains greater minds than theirs. They recognize the Seminary as the fountainhead of the Conservative movement. We rely on their judgment concerning the ordination of women. We're not scholars. Out goal is to educate the Jewish woman in perpetuating Judaism."

Somewhere out there, beyond the Jewish Theological Seminary and its support groups, are the one-and-a-half million Conservative congregants, who so far have shown minimal concern over the question of women rabbis. Nevertheless, the women congregants were undoubtedly among those responding to *Redbook*'s Survey on Women's Attitudes Toward Religion. Among the findings published in the April 1977 issue was the fact that 86 percent of Jewish women supported the ordination of women.

Back in 1973, the congregations' organization, the United Synagogue of America, issued the strongest statement for equal religious participation yet to be made by any arm of the Conservative movement. This included the resolution that "the United Synagogue of America... looks with favor on the admission of qualified women to the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America."

The response of Seminary faculty and administration has been simply to dismiss the resolution as violating the gentlemen's agreement not to encroach on each other's territory or, as Chancellor Cohen has done, to dismiss the statement as "a passing fad." Women's League President Ruth Perry considers the resolution "the quietest thing ever done. Not even half the Conservative Jews know about it."

While the men who make Seminary policy continue to debate the appropriateness of women rabbis, the women and men who are part of the Conservative movement might do well to start raising the issue of a woman rabbi in their own congregation. As one Seminary scholar put it, "If there were a hue and cry from dozens of congregations for women rabbis, the Seminary Rabbinical School would find a way to admit women."

In fact, many congregations have not yet even accepted the 1973 decision of the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards that permits women to be counted in the *minyan* or its 1955 decision allowing women to be called to the Torah for an *aliyah* on an equal basis with men. According to the Rabbinical Assembly survey, while 62 percent of the rabbis favor calling women to the Torah equally with men, only 36.7 percent of the congregations give equal *aliyot* to women. And although 56.3 percent of the rabbis said they favor counting women in the *minyan*, only 39 percent of the congregations count women.

In major Conservative congregations such as Rabbi Sol Landau's Beth David Congregation in Miami and Rabbi Waxman's synagogue, Temple Israel of Great Neck, Long Island, the vote to extend these equal rites to women followed two years of education and discussion.

When all other arguments fail, those opposed to ordaining women argue that not even the Reform or Reconstructionist congregations are eager for women rabbis. Only one of the three Reconstructionist women rabbis and two of the three Reform women rabbis have pulpits. Women who are Reform student rabbis have run into resistance in placement. As a result, the rabbinical and congregational arms of the Reform movement have set up task forces to see that Reform Judaism's principle of sexual equality is also practiced. In fact, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Reform Judaism's congregational organization, estimates that by 1979, one-third of all newly ordained Reform rabbis will be women. Among them will be women who would have been ordained as Conservative rabbis if their applications had not been rejected by the Seminary.

Sandy Levine is one of these women. She is turning down acceptance as a graduate student at the Seminary in favor of training at the Reform rabbinical school, though she is still determined to become a Conservative rabbi. In fact, she hopes that others concerned about opening the Seminary Rabbinical School to women will write to her at the Berkeley Jewish Women's Alliance, 1644 Oxford St., #10, Berkeley, CA 94709. "There's no reason I can't keep battling from outside, applying to the Seminary every year," she said. "I still want to fight to let women have the option of being ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"My heart is set on the Conservative movement because I'm a Conservative Jew," she continued. "This movement has molded and shaped me into wanting to be a rabbi and this same movement is closing the door to me."

Circumcision Is No Insurance

Debunking some myths about Jewish women and cervical cancer

by Sharon Lieberman

Linda Rubinstein

The enduring myth that male circumcision is the single most important explanation for the low rates of cervical cancer in Jewish women has been passed from generation to generation for over three-quarters of a century. However, studies have shown that for *all* women, their sexual behavior patterns play a far more active role in the etiology (cause and effect) of cervical cancer than the circumcision status of their male partners. For this reason alone, Jewish women must place the role of circumcision in a contemporary context that reflects current female sexual behavior.

The low incidence of cancer of the uterine cervix among Jewish women was first noted in British medical literature in 1901. From 1901 through 1960, nearly 15 major studies confirmed that original finding: Jewish women—Ashkenazic, Sephardic and Mizrachi—living under disparate economic and social conditions in the United States, Europe and Israel had significantly lower cervical cancer rates than white or black non-Jewish women. A 1950 study in New York City, for instance, observed that there were 4.6 cases of cervical cancer per 100,000 Jewish women compared to 20 cases for white non-Jewish women and 49.6 for black non-Jewish women.

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What Is a Jew?

The existence of the diaspora complicates genetic studies of Jews since Jews now living on five continents constitute a very wide range of genetic (inherited) characteristics. Most studies of Jews refer to three sub-groups: Ashkenazic (European), Sephardic (Mediterranean) and Mizrachi (Middle Eastern and Asian).

Jews do not share a common environment. Cancer studies of Jews usually compare those living in New York City (40% of the American Jewish population) and those in Israel. There are not only differences in environment and communal life between Israel and the U.S., but also differences between Jews who are foreign-born and native-born.

The cervix is the lower end of the uterus which protrudes into the vagina. Cancers of the cervix are not believed to be directly related to diet or the body's hormonal production, as are many cancers of other body sites. Actually, there is little disparity in cancer sites between Jewish men and women. Cancers related to sites of hormonal activity—the pancreas, the colon and even the breast—are more frequent in Jews, both women and men, than in other ethnic groups. Cancers of these sites are often attributed to a

combination of genetic and dietary factors that affect hormonal activity. The uterine cervix, however is different; it does not secrete a hormone.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women, breast cancer being the most common. The high-risk age for cervical cancer in all women is from 35-55; however, the incidence of cervical cancer in Ashkenazi women appears to peak at age 70.

Cervical cancer does not progress as rapidly as breast cancer. If detected early, localized cervical cancer is 100% curable through cauterization or, more likely, a hysterectomy. The survival rates for advanced (spreading) cervical cancer are 60-85% 5 years after detection and treatment. Early detection is important. A Pap test once or twice a year is a wise policy for all women and especially for those who are sexually active or who have chronic vaginal or cervical infections.

Skewed Statistics

"Marital status" in population studies traditionally means whom one is legally married to, not who is one's sexual partner. Marital status means very little if single (and married) women are sexually active and non-monogamous.

Occupation and income, two important variables in population studies, have too often been the attribute of the father or husband of the female being studied. This reveals the assumptions of the male-dominated sciences that a woman's identity—her working condition, home environment, and lifestyle—is synonymous with that of a primary male.

An additional variable rarely mentioned in scientific literature when the relationship of economic status and disease is discussed, is access to medical care. Such access could mean early disease detection as well as basic health education about venereally transmitted diseases.

Cervical cancer is believed to be linked to sexual and/or reproductive conditions favorable to a carcenogenic agent. In other words, a condition such as the repeated exposure through sexual intercourse to a possible carcinogenic agent—a virus or even sperm—could trigger abnormal cellular growth on the cervix.

Researchers, intrigued by studies of nuns and prostitutes, have pursued the theory that cervical cancer, like a venereal disease, may be sexually transmitted. An extreme but important study of over 3,000 Canadian nuns, conducted in 1950, observed a virtual absence of cervical cancer a 1953 study of Danish prostitutes noted a frequent occurrence of the disease. Also, single women were found to have lower rates of cervical cancer than married women.

If cervical cancer is indeed related to sexual activity, scientists reasoned, then something in the sex life of married Jewish women might provide a clue to their low rates. The major difference in the sexual lives of Jewish and non-Jewish women was thought to be the circumcision status of their partners.

Circumcision is a religious requirement for Jewish males. Circumcision, or removal of the foreskin of the penis, prevents the accumulation of smegma on the penis. Smegma is the cheesy secretion of the lubricating glands beneath the foreskin. (However, an uncircumcised male who follows a regimen of penile hygiene —pulling back the foreskin and washing the penis—could himself prevent the accumulation of smegma.)

Smegma has been strongly implicated in lab studies as a possible agent of cervical cancer, particularly in viral theories of cancer. The vagina just may provide a hospitable environment for a virus that is transmitted in smegma. This virus, then, in combination with other factors, could trigger abnormal cellular changes in cervical cells.

But studies of circumcision as a cervical cancer preventative have shown gaps in scientific reliability. For instance, in 1958, two U.S. investigators studied 213 males who were admitted to a Midwestern hospital. Upon close examination, they found that 34% of the men provided incorrect information about their circumcision status. It was considered significant that if *men* were unsure about their circumcision status, then cervical cancer patients must be even less reliable informants.

Even more important, however, a National Cancer Institute study published in 1960 found that a considerable number of non-Jewish cervical cancer patients had sexual partners who *were* circumcised. Circumcision began to seem less of a key factor as it also became apparent from this study that New York Jewish women with cervical cancer had more uncircumcised partners than Israeli women with cervical cancer—but that New York and Israeli Jewish women shared equally low rates.

Both Jewish and Moslem men are ritually circumcised and both have very low rates of cancer of the penis, but there are no definitive studies to compare the cervical cancer rates of Jewish and Moslem women; surely such studies could prove invaluable and are without doubt called for. However, 1960 statistics gathered in Britain did show a high rate of cervical cancer in some Islamic countries. Since there may be an entire new generation of Soviet Jewish males who are not circumcised, some investigators have suggested cervical cancer studies for Soviet Jewish women.

Is Herpes a Factor?

Research attention has shifted in recent years from the conditions favorable to cervical cancer to the actual carcinogenic agent. Genital Herpes virus, for example, is thought to be a precursor of the disease; this virus is believed to be transmitted by men.

Signs of Herpes virus infection have been found more often in cervical cancer patients than in women free of the disease; also, a virus that appears to be Herpes virus (type II) has been isolated from cervical cancer cells. A 1976 study by Dr. Irving I. Kessler at the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health found an unusually high rate of cervical cancer in the wives of men who had previously been married to women who had developed cancer of the cervix. Dr. Kessler and others have hypothesized that the causative agent was genital Herpes virus passed through sexual intercourse.

Even more disconcerting are studies of sperm as a possible carcinogenic agent. A 1975 laboratory study by Drs. Aaron Bendich and Ellen Borenfreund of New York's Sloan-Kettering Memorial Cancer Center discovered that sperm might, under certain favorable conditions, cause cervical cancer. Nothing conclusive, however, has been proved to directly connect either Herpes virus II or sperm to cervical cancer.

In fact, the male role in cervical cancer is just beginning to receive close attention. In studies published in 1976, several researchers have sketched out a profile of men they consider to be high-risk *sources*: those men with venereal disease, certain genital cancers, or multiple sex partners.

At present, however, it seems clear that the alleged "protection" afforded Jewish women by circumcised Jewish men has been based on negative inferences: there was no substantial evidence that the uncircumcised penis promoted cervical cancer—but there is still no evidence that circumcision prevented it. Studies have been suggestive, not definitive.

The strongest correlations to condi-

tions for cervical cancer are the sexual behavior patterns of women who have the disease: early sexual activity, multiple sex partners and early childbearing. The largest group of cervical cancer patients are women of low economic status. Cervical cancer studies have observed that women of low economic status tend to have sexual intercourse earlier in life with more partners than do middle class women

Obviously, the low rates for Jewish women must transcend the sexual behavior patterns generally attached to class status. We can only speculate as to why our low rates appear to be a cross-class phenomenon. Were or are there unique rituals or traditions within Jewish life which affected sexual habits or behavior?

One 1948 study of Israeli Jewish women focused on the laws of *niddah* (menstruation), which codify marital relations between Jewish husband and wife. The *niddah* laws mandate sexual abstinence for the duration of the menses (at least 5 days) and for 7 days following. The approach in this study was that if sexual activity were strictly regulated according to the *niddah* laws, then their observance might account for the minimal cases of cervical cancer in Jewish women.

But the *niddah* factor lost scientific reliability when personal interviews revealed that the laws were rarely observed by Ashkenazic women, and observed more frequently among Sephardic and Mizrachi women—and yet both subgroups shared low rates for cervical cancer. Investigators found that Jews in Israel tended to follow unregulated patterns of sexual activity. Clearly, there was no basis for scientific control if Israeli Jews did not observe specific laws of abstinence within marriage. (No studies have yet been done, however, comparing cervical cancer rates among Jewish women who observed *niddah* strictly and those who don't.)

Perhaps Jewish women of all classes have a tradition of conservative sexual behavior generally, which may or may not be the manifestation of a distinctly Jewish code of monogamy. Historians have described sexual monogamy among Jewish women and men not only as the custom but also the ideal, probably deriving from reasons of internal cohesion and harmony. Monogamy may have coincidentally served to protect Jewish women from exposure to disease processes that may be linked to non-monogamous sexual activity.

Jewish law requires a husband to provide his wife with sexual satisfaction [*see article by Blu Greenberg in this issue*]. Classical Jewish interpretation of the Mosaic commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" says that the male is responsible for fulfilling the commandment to procreate lest his woman "go seeking in the marketplace" (*Genesis Rabbah 8:14*).

Yet seeking in the marketplace is exactly what might change the cervical cancer rates for an entire generation of Jewish women who are only now entering the high-risk age group. The sexual freedoms of the past 15 years have altered the sexual behavior patterns of many women. Patterns of sexual behavior are now less class-defined. Young American women of all classes are now sexually active at earlier ages with more than one partner than most of the women studied from 1901 to 1960. Class status and even affluence should have less significance in emerging cervical cancer patterns where sexual behavior is a key factor in etiology.

It should be apparent by now that it is an uncertain business to make solid inferences from statistics. Most of the population studies discussed here were based on the *records* (not always face-to-face interviews) of women with cervical cancer. All the studies were retrospective, resulting in statistical observations of—not conclusions about—what had already happened, not what *will* happen. So while we know the rates for cervical cancer in our grandmothers' or mothers' generations, what about the current generation of women from ages 30 to 50?

Even individual sexual behavior may come to be less important on the list of cancer precursors in light of the widespread use of prescribed hormones. We are just beginning to witness the deleterious effects of long-term use of the Pill as well as estrogen replacement therapy for menopausal women. We have yet to see the full impact of oral contraceptives on women all over the world who are still of childbearing age.

An editorial in a recent issue of the American Cancer Society's clinical journal points out that "the trend over the past years shows that cancer mortality would be declining but for the increase in estrogen use." Other cancer researchers are more emphatic: prescribed hormones will precipitate an epidemic of breast, uterine —and cervical—cancers.

There is still much to be learned about the cause of cervical cancer. Continued studies of Jewish women are necessary to further basic understanding of cancer etiology. The most important variable, sexual behavior, deserves much more attention from the scientific community. If Jewish women share a racial or ethnic genetic immunity to cervical cancer, that should become clear in comparisons of American Jewish women—with our more "liberated" lifestyles—with Israeli Jewish women, whose sexual precocity is generally channeled into early marriage. If sexual monogamy has been a tradition for Jews, then surely Jewish men have also been monogamous, and this is an important contributing factor in studying sexual behavior patterns and their relationship to cervical cancer. All women—Jewish and non-Jewish—should call for cervical cancer studies that question men about their sexual behavior and do not make assumptions about "single" or "married" sex life.

Clearly, as Jewish women living in a secular environment, we must look beyond that comforting myth of the protection afforded us by male circumcision, and consider the responsibilities and risks that accompany lifestyles divergent from our Jewish traditions.

In demystifying the role of circumcision in cervical cancer, we have also established the sexual autonomy of the Jewish female. For if we believed that our circumcised men provided a cancer prophylaxis, we would rather arbitrarily enhance their desirability as sexual partners. But if we can acknowledge that, in fact, *we* control the risk of disease through our sexual behavior, we take on a responsibility for our sexual and reproductive lives, for our health, our bodies, our selves.

Breast Cancer

While all Jewish women have relatively low rates of cervical cancer, middle- and upper-class Ashkenazic Jewish women are considered a high risk for breast cancer.

There is mounting evidence that a diet high in saturated fats may adversely affect the metabolism of blood cholesterol. This may, in turn, overstimulate the body's steroid hormones, giving impetus to tumor formation. A high-fat diet —usually associated with Western affluence—could possible trigger a genetic predisposition to breast cancer.

Early detection greatly reduces the mortality risk of breast cancer. In addition to self-examination for lumps, women with a family history of breast cancer (blood relatives who had the disease) and women with lumpy, cystic breasts, should have a mammography (breast X-ray) at least once, especially past age 35. Women over 50, with or without the history or symptoms, should also have a mammography at least once. Routine mammography (more than once or once a year) should be a decision between a woman and her doctor. Exposure to X-ray should not exceed 2 units per visit.

Kol Ishah

Kol Ishah, literally, woman's voice. Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not allowed to be heard in public lest it arouse men. Thus women were silenced. But no more. The voices of women are breaking through the silence of centuries to speak to each other and to the community at large of what is happening in their lives. These pages are open to news of Jewish women's actions, providing the opportunity for women's voices to be heard by all.

First Jewish Women's Conference Explores Personal Growth and Institutional Change

"The Changing Role of Women in Judaism: The Cherished Rose or the Thorn in the Side of Tradition" was the title of the first Jewish women's conference at Cornell University, held on February 6, 1977. Sparked by a controversy last Rosh Hashanah over whether or not women could receive an *aliyah* at the Conservative service, Hillel officers Sharon Flank and Libby Waldman initiated the plan for a conference where women could express their concerns and explore ways of effecting change. Cornell Hillel's Rabbi Morris Goldfarb and director Illana Hoffman provided support.

The conference, attended by about 100 persons, began with a panel discussion of divergent views on women's place in Judaism.

Rachel Seigel, psychiatric social worker:

"I am not a theologian, not a historian. I am a Jew—a wandering European Jew come to America in my teens.... I am a woman—I have been married 33 years. I have mothered and probably overmothered one daughter and two sons.... I am deeply committed to the feminist cause of recognizing and challenging the rigid sex roles our society has created for women and for men....

Shoshannah Seidman, mother of two children:

"As a Jewish woman, I feel frustrated and resentful of those who try to push me out of the home. I resent those who ask 'What do you do all day long?' Judaism is not just a religion. It is a way of life. Being at home I feel I can do it (fulfill those obligations of wife and mother) to the best of my power."

Beverly Tanenhaus, poet and critic:

"In my fairly typical Conservative Jewish family... I had to fight to be allowed to attend Hebrew School; my brothers went as a matter of course. Although I studied with the rabbi, my Bat Mitzvah was really a project between my mother and me.... The fact that I was an outstanding Hebrew student did not seem to significantly boost my self-esteem. I knew my performance could never compare with my brothers' Bar Mitzvah because I was given less to accomplish; I was not entrusted with the reading of the Torah. To commemorate that special day, I was given brass candlesticks, a gold lame evening bag. My brothers received shares of IBM stock. In the materialistic values of that time, highlighted by a religious setting, I learned my lesson well: my brothers were worth more than I was."

If there were some women in the audience who were dismayed that men were not only invited but were also allowed to participate in the conference, their worst fears were realized as soon as the first young male questioner rose and berated the feminists for "not knowing their place." It appeared at first as if the comments of the minority of men were setting the tone of the conference. One man asked why women needed to be obligated to pray. "If you feel the need to pray, no one is stopping you."

Suddenly a woman in the audience rose—Joan Friedman, a third-year rabbinical student at the (Reform) Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. She explained that prayer which is not obligatory is not taken as seriously under Jewish law as prayer which is an obligation (*mitzvah*). It is obvious, she said, that if women are to take their full place as Jews, their right to fulfill such *mitzvot* must be established.

There was a hush. And then a burst of applause as the audience recognized that a *woman* had spoken as a Jew of authority and had legitimized the concerns of women. Women did not need to apologize any longer for their lack of knowledge. *Their* rabbi had spoken.

The workshops which followed included: "The Jewish Mother—Is She to Blame?"; "God Language"; "Women in Israeli Society"; "The Jewish Woman in Folklore"; "Creating New Rituals"; and "Marry a Doctor or Be One—College Women Choosing a Lifestyle."

In the session "Marry a Doctor or Be One," students discussed the pros and cons of a career which allowed time out for child-rearing, or careers which were portable and would fit in with a husband's demands—but, surprisingly, none of the participants considered the possibility of remaining single, or being a single parent, or any lifestyle other than a traditional one.

Special tensions were apparent in those workshops that were attended by men. In one workshop, for example, everyone sat on low couches. The one man who attended chose to sit in a position of authority at the one desk in the

Nancy Imberman Tamler

room. He declined an invitation to share a seat with the other participants.

The talk by Joan Friedman on "Being a Woman in the Rabbinate" provided all who desire to see change within the existing structure a great sense of hope. Admitting that she is still troubled by conflicting issues of feminism vs. Judaism, she nevertheless is committed to her profession, feeling confident that the answers will come. She urged us to seek out new rituals, especially rites of passage for women as absolutely crucial, and maintained that she doesn't have to accept *everything* just because it is written. Neither do we.

"Things change," said Ms. Friedman, "by having people do them... the way to effect change is to do it. Then it will become normal."

Bryna J. Fireside

"New" Naming Ceremonies for Girls a Sephardic Tradition

In LILITH's second issue there appeared a description of a new naming ceremony for girls—"Ceremonial Welcoming for a Newborn Jewish daughter." A centuries-old Sephardic birth ceremony for girls has come to our attention and is described below.

Las fadas (the fairies), the Sephardic naming ceremony for girls, dates back to a non-Jewish tradition of medieval Spain, according to Rabbi Marc Angel of Congregation Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York.

Medieval Spaniards believed that upon the birth of a child good fairies appeared to bestow their blessings. This tradition was Judaized by placing it within a religious framework. Friends and relatives were invited to the parents' home, where the rabbi held the baby daughter and recited verses from the Song of Songs, announced the child's name and offered blessings for her and her family. The baby was then passed around from guest to guest who also offered their blessings and good wishes to the family.

It is interesting to note that the direct translation of one of the passages from the naming prayer states, in blessing the mother, the wish that she be "the radiant mother of male children." However, the text used by Congregation Shearith Israel is translated by Rabbi De Sola Pool to read "the radiant mother of children."

Ruth Koffler

UJA New Women's Cabinet—Separate But How Equal?

In the second issue of LILITH, we reported that the United Jewish Appeal's men-only Young Leadership Cabinet was torn over whether or not to admit women, despite its Executive Committee's vote last August to open the Cabinet to women.

The issue has been resolved with the creation of a separate Young Women's Leadership Cabinet. The all-women Cabinet will be independent of the UJA National Women's Division but will work with the Women's Division and the men's Cabinet to develop educational, leadership development and fund raising programs.

Jane Sherman of Detroit, daughter of UJA patriarch Max Fisher, is acting chairman of the Cabinet. She is currently vice chairman of the National Women's Division. The staff director is Barbara Faske, who was assistant director of the all-male Young Leadership Cabinet.

The women's Cabinet is still in the initial stages of organization. According to steering committee member Linda Feinstone of New York, the steering committee will act as the initial membership committee, considering names suggested by community leaders and local UJA professionals.

Ms. Feinstone, 34, vice president of Archaeological Tours to Israel, had been nominated to the men's Cabinet following their short-lived decision to admit women. She said she "originally opposed the idea of a women's Cabinet," feeling that "women could be effectively served by a joint Cabinet." Like several of the men in the Young Leadership Cabinet who had pushed for admitting women, she hopes that eventually the two Cabinets will merge.

The men's Cabinet—the elite cadre from which national UJA leaders are chosen—was willing to stand by its decision to admit women unless women leaders decided to form their own Cabinet, which they did.

One observer, a long-time volunteer and professional in Jewish organizations, feared that the Young Women's Leadership Cabinet will be separate but not equal. She said, "We women are always too ready to be the peacemakers."

Hadassah Endorses ERA

The National Board of Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization of America endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment at the closing session of its annual Mid-Winter Conference in February, as follows:

"Hadassah, an organization of 350,000 women, applauds efforts to protect the rights of women. We do not accept differentiation of rights between men and women and endorse the proposed Equal Rights Amendment as a statement of this principle."

The statement was submitted and spearheaded by Roslyn K. Brecher, who chairs the organization's American Affairs Department and was formerly Editorial Director of *Hadassah Magazine*.

Study guides on the ERA are being sent out to local chapters.

Southern California Task Force Wants Room At The Top For Women in Jewish Organizations

If a man presents something, it is taken seriously. I am not listened to with anything other than politeness. Outside the Jewish community, I am respected and heard in my field. Within the Jewish community, I am not even listened to.

The provocative theme "Jewish and Female: Moving Up in Communal Life" attracted over 100 men and women to a special seminar of the Southern California Conference of Jewish Communal Workers, held in the board room of the Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles in January.

Susan Marks, conference co-chairperson and assistant director of the Federation's Southern Area Council, said that "the seminar was spurred on by the fact that women hold a negligible number of the many executive-level positions in the Jewish community." Los Angeles, the second largest Jewish community in the United States, is the only one of the major Federations that has a female president, Barbi Weinberg. However, aside from the director of the Women's Conference and the director of the Youth Department—traditionally women's positions—there are no female department directors in the Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles.

The most dramatic event of the program was the opening—a 15-minute tape featuring the comments of various anonymous women involved in Jewish communal work on how being female has affected their careers. It proved to be a gripping experience and served as the catalyst for the entire session.

A woman has to be twice as good to get the same job as a man—the fundraising positions which are the steppingstones to the executive level. The administration would not actively seek out a woman to fill positions now open. Those who have the responsibility for hiring don't think in terms of women, period. They are not thinking of hiring an individual, but rather—"we need a man for that job."

Tova Feder, the creative spirit behind the seminar, is a public relations associate on the staff of the Jewish Federation-Council. She spent some three weeks interviewing a dozen women. The tape segment was culled from over 30 hours of interviews.

I applied for a job in another community that had a fundraising component and after months of waiting, I was told that they wanted someone with more fundraising experience. I then found out that the man who got the position had even less fundraising than I did and no community organization experience. It was a very trying time and had some really sexist components.... Given a choice between a fairly competent male and a highly competent female, the male gets the job.

The tape was followed by a question-and-answer session which showed not only the excitement of the women, but the anxieties of the men. "What I am hearing," said one man, "is that if we move women up into positions in the community, they are going to be taking the jobs away from men."

The interest in the subject exhibited by the professional communal workers who attended resulted in the establishment of a Task Force on Women's Issues in the Jewish Community, chaired by Esther Shapiro, director of the Los Angeles Hillel Council Extension. It will include top executives in the Federations and other Jewish agencies as well as other professional personnel on all levels.

The Task Force will explore the expanding role of women in the Jewish community and will formulate concrete means to establish definite action programs which will enhance the position of the professional women in Jewish communal service.

Susan Marks believes that the issue of women in Jewish communal life is a "crucial issue confronting leadership hierarchies in Jewish organizations across the country." After the seminar, she said, "I don't know where we are headed—but it will be up!"

Mara Kochba

Fate of Israel's New Abortion Law Uncertain With Begin Victory

The Israeli Knesset (Parliament) passed in February a liberalized abortion bill that had generated a good deal of controversy.

The measure legalizes abortion in the early stages of pregnancy upon the approval of a committee of three, which must consist of two doctors (one a gynecologist) and a social worker. The committee must certify that the birth would injure the physical or emotional health of the mother, or that the child would be born with a physical or mental defect, or that the mother is under 16 or over 40, c that the pregnancy resulted from inces rape or was out of wedlock.

Marcia Freedman, who had prev ously sponsored a bill for abortion on d mand, said that the measure that passe still "leaves doctors in charge of a wo man's womb" and that the conditions ne essary for a legal abortion would contin to leave women to the tender loving gree of the illegal abortionists. (Last summe Israel's association of gynecologists, man of whom have grown wealthy doing illega abortions for upper and middle-class wo men, condemned the proposed liberalize abortion bill. Members of the Israeli Fem nist Movement demonstrated their prote at this convention.) Estimates of Israel current number of abortions range fro 40,000 to 70,000 per year.

The liberalized abortion bill face vehement opposition, primarily from th religious and conservative elements in th Knesset, among them Geula Cohen of th Likud (right-wing) bloc. The bill wa passed by a show of hands while the Or thodox M.K's were outside the Knesse building holding an anti-abortion demon stration.

Israel's Ashkenazic Chief Rabb Shlomo Goren demanded the new law b abolished because it has "no moral valid ity." Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yose said it "permitted murder."

WUJS Supports Women's Rights in Jewish Organizations

The 17th Triennial Congress of th World Union of Jewish Students, passe in December this resolution on feminism presented by the American and Italia delegations.

The 17th Triennial Congress o WUJS affirms and supports women's righ to equal possibilities in social, economi and political activities. Considering the handicapped position of women in politi cal and cultural Jewish organizations ana particularly in head roles, engages WUJ secretariat to increase the awareness o Jewish youth on this theme, by seminars and other activities. We therefore, cal upon every national union to face the problem on an educational basis.

NRP Women Reject Remaining "At The Mercy Of The Men"

The women's affiliate of Israel's National Religious Party is determined to form its own faction before the party's next convention. Tova Sanhedrai, who heads the National Religious Women's

Organization, stated that women no longer want to remain at the mercy of the men.

Women constitute approximately 15 to 17 percent of the NRP membership. When the slate was formed for the May Knesset (Israeli Parliament) elections, the women's group threatened to remove their candidate from the NRP list because of her low position on the list, but they were persuaded to remain.

Israeli Report Exposes Foreign Ministry Discrimination Against Women

The Israeli Prime Minister's Committee on the Status of Women has called Israel's Foreign Ministry the second worst ministry in its employment of women. (The worst in terms of the percentage of women in upper level positions was the Ministry for Religious Affairs; the best was the Ministry of Justice.)

At the Foreign Ministry, only 7% of the highest ranking jobs are filled by women. The report also stated that men doing the same work as women are given a different title and higher pay, for example female secretaries and male office managers do the same work for different salaries.

The Committee on the Status of Women noted that this discrimination creates "unnecessary bitterness" and deprives the Foreign Ministry of talent.

The Ministry recently appointed women to the positions of Deputy Head of its African Division and First Secretary to the Israeli Embassy in Ottawa.

Celebrating 300 Years of Jewish Journalism: Where Are The Women?

"300 Years of World Jewish Press" was commemorated by a three-day conference in Jerusalem in January. From a Jewish woman's point of view, the conference might well have been titled "300 years of exclusion from the world Jewish press."

An account of the history of the Jewish press, written by six men, was presented to each journalist at the conference. In reviewing this book I find that not one board member of the World Union of Jewish Journalists, past or present, has been a woman, Not one keynote speaker at the three conferences commemorating world Jewish journalism has been a woman. In fact, in this entire history of 300 years of Jewish journalism, there is no mention of any women whatsoever.

One hundred journalists from 15 different countries attended the conference, most of them Ashkenazic men over 50 who spent three days mourning the death of the Yiddish language and emphasizing the need to "keep the Israel propaganda rolling."

The only speaker to break the tone of status quo was Murray Zuckoff, editor of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. He called for a more alive, responsible, and sophisticated Jewish press. The audience loudly applauded his suggestion for a re-evaluation and new direction for the Jewish press. He pointed out that few young people are entering the field of Jewish journalism and that the Jewish press traditionally deals with a shallow and blindly optimistic view of Israel. He stressed the need for more in-depth writing on Israel and its problems—discrimination against women and Sephardic Jews—and an examination of the quality of life in Israel.

Approximately 15 women attended from such countries as the U.S., Italy, France, England and Austria. I asked each woman journalist what she felt the relevance of women's issues was to the conference and to her work as a writer. Several of the American women told me that they work mainly helping their journalist husbands, and one of them even writes her articles under her husband's name. Many of them gave negative or nervous replies to my inquiries on women's issues. One woman stammered, "Oh, it isn't that I'm against women's lib ..." to which her 14-year-old daughter confidently remarked, "Oh yes you are."

The European women journalists were considerably more responsive on the subject of Jewish women. Two women represented an Italian Jewish paper, *Shalom*, which features a regular column on Jewish women. Marta Halpert, an Austrian who lived in Israel for five years, was the only woman owner as well as editor of her own publication. Her *Neue Welt*, a revival of Theodore Herzl's original periodical, also features a regular column on Jewish and Israeli women.

Of special interest to women journalists will be a private "over coffee" discussion I had with one woman who asked to remain anonymous. A successful journalist since the age of 20, she described the practice of what she called "horizontal progress" in the journalism field. It has been her experience that on every newspaper staff, the women are expected to sleep with their male bosses in order to get ahead. She emphasized that this is not just an isolated incident, and that she has resisted this insulting "requirement" for years.

On the last day of the conference, Shimon Peres, then Israeli Minister of Defense, held a question-answer session for the journalists. When he discussed with amusement the admission of women into West Point, several women turned to me and encouraged me to stand up and say something. These women, with such urgent looks on their faces, were some of the same women that just a day ago had responded negatively or apathetically to my inquiry on women's issues. It was their sudden, unspoken request for representation that encouraged me to stand and challenge Peres, something I ordinarily might never have done.

Since he had mentioned West Point, I asked Peres what was he doing to improve the shortage of *"koach adam"* (manpower) in the Israeli Army. What new military training are Israeli women receiving? I translated *"koach adam"* as "people power" for which I received several boos among the surprisingly numerous cheers.

Peres smiled at my translation and answered that women in the army were being trained for responsible positions in such fields as medical care and communications. (Women in the Israeli Army are traditionally telephone switchboard operators and secretaries.) The advantage of this training lies not only in improving the army, he said, but in helping to make women better wives and mothers.

The confrontation, which included another question on women in politics, brought about unexpected results. I was congratulated on my questions and my one copy of LILITH went from hand to hand.

As one of the few young women, representing the only alternative publication at the conference, it is clear to me that Jewish journalism, like Jewish culture and religion, needs its history re-examined and its direction re-defined.

Gloria Averbuch

Mazel Tov

•Carmela Carr, appointed Executive Director of the American Zionist Federation.

•Aneta Jozefowicz of Denmark, the first woman to be elected Chairperson of the 53-year-old World Union of Jewish Students.

•Linda Rubin, appointed Executive Director of Americans for Progressive Israel-Hashomer Hatzair.

Kol Ishah call

Kol Ishah welcomes news items for this column—local, national, international—as well as press clippings for events that our readers feel deserve coverage in LILITH. Please include name and address. All submissions become property of LILITH magazine.

Divorce proceedings are explained to Gitl (Carol Kane) by the Rabbi (Zvee Scooler) in the film "Hester Street." While the story is turn-of- the-century, the proceedings are the same today.

Jewish Divorce Law

If We Must Part, Let's Part as Equals

by Blu Greenberg

A year ago, while on a Sabbatical in Israel with my husband and children, we employed a Yemenite woman of 33 as an ozeret *(housekeeper). During the course of the year, she went through a costly divorce. While both Tikvah and Shmuel wanted the divorce, as he got closer to the rabbinic courts he began to sense what he did not know before—that he had great power over her.*

What had started out as a fairly just settlement turned ugly. Little by little, his demands accelerated. Finally, Tikvah's lawyer told her to sign over to him her half of the apartment's eventual resale rights and be through with him, otherwise, the case would drag through the rabbinic courts for years. And that is what she did. Despite some flashes of resentment, she considered herself lucky.

Traditional Jewish divorce law points up two things: how much change has taken place during the evolution of this *halachah* (Jewish legal system); and how much further development it needs to serve women more equitably and indiscriminately.

According to Biblical law, a man is permitted to divorce his wife at will and send her away from his home (*see box*). The second aspect highlights Biblical women's vulnerability: economic, physical, and psychological uprooting faced the woman who displeased her husband sufficiently to cause him to divorce her. She had no leverage to prevent or refuse the divorce. Neither could she divorce him.

Man's Right of Divorce

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if she finds no favor in his eyes because of *ervat davar* (some fault or indecency) and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house —and she marries another man, and the latter... writes her a bill of divorce... or dies—then her former husband cannot marry her again because she has been defiled... (*Deuteronomy 24:1-4*).

Yet there were qualifications, important because the rabbis who interpreted Biblical law for later generations built the legal structure on them.

The husband had to write a bill of divorce and present it to his wife before sending her away (*Deut. 24:1,3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8*). This served as protection for her, as a delaying mechanism so that in a fit of anger a husband could not simply pronounce a declaration of divorce and be done with her. Second, it was deduced from the Biblical law on the accusation of premarital sexual experience (*see box*) that a husband was required to pay some kind of alimony settlement upon divorce. (It was this payment that the accusing husband sought to get out of; he had nothing else to gain from the procedure as he could divorce his wife at will.) Third, there were two specific instances recorded in the Bible in which a man could never divorce his wife: if he had falsely accused her of premarital sex; or if she was a virgin he had raped and was forced to marry. (This law, which appears to us crude, was designed for the protection of the woman who, having lost her virginity through no fault of her own, would be otherwise unmarriageable.)

Though in themselves these limits represented very minor safeguards for women, they must be understood as the first breakthrough in establishing a crucial principle: the right of a community to set

Accusation of Premarital Sex

If a man takes a wife and... hates her and... spreads an evil name about her saying... "I found no signs of virginity in her," then her father and mother must bring forth the signs of the wife's virginity to the elders of the city.... They shall chastise that man and penalize him 100 shekels of silver and give them to the father of the wife because the husband spread an evil name upon a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife and he shall not be free to divorce her (*Deuteronomy 22:13-21*).

Blu Greenberg, a writer and lecturer on contemporary Jewish issues, wrote "Women's Liberation and Jewish Law" for LILITH's premiere issue.

limits on a man's absolute and private right of divorce.

Moreover, it appears from Biblical narrative that the social sanctions against divorce were quite powerful and that it occurred rarely. In the isolated instances where a woman was sent away (e.g. *Genesis 21:11-12; I Samuel 3:14-16*), it was a great trauma for her husband as well. The fact that the divorce law appears as an aside (in the context of a law forbidding a man to remarry his ex-wife) can be understood both as a limitation of a man's absolute control over divorce and as an indication of the general inappropriateness of his divorcing his wife.

The rabbis were not insensitive to the inequites in Biblical divorce law. In Talmudic and post-Talmudic literature, they articulated many elaborations and emendations of this law (as they did with Biblical law touching all areas of life) which gave women greater protection. Little by little, the imbalance of Biblical law was tempered by numerous restrictive rabbinic measures. Thus, the theoretical basis of the law—that divorce was a man's God-given right—remained intact: it was not challenged but rather modified in many practical ways to neutralize its force.

We can see this pattern, which characterizes much of rabbinic action—or non-action—for many ensuing centuries, begin to emerge in an early rabbinic dispute between the schools of Hillel and Shammai (first century B.C.E.). Shammai, the strict constructionist of Biblical law, maintained that the Scriptural words *ervat davar* meant literally and exclusively adultery. Thus, a woman's infidelity was the only legitimate grounds for divorce. Hillel, known as a liberal because he generally interpreted Scripture more broadly, interpreted *ervat davar* as anything that was offensive to the husband. As in most disputes, rabbinic law followed Hillel.

For the next few centuries, major Talmudists reiterated the principle of the unrestricted right of the husband to divorce his wife. The opposing view restricting this right made itself felt in the many critical moral judgments against divorce (such as Rabbi Yochanan's statement that "He who divorces his wife is hated by God") and in the growing number of curbs on a man's absolute right.

Throughout much of rabbinic history, three interacting forces were adjusted in each decision concerning divorce law: the theory of man's absolute right; the Biblical precedents establishing some qualification of this right; and the earliest rabbinic sources which construed the Biblical laws strictly or broadly. These three variables could be juggled, depending on one's teacher's views, the climate of the times, one's inclinations in these matters, and the particular divorce case at hand.

The rabbinic qualifications took several different forms: enlarging the number of cases in which there is an absolute prohibition against divorce; embellishing and making more complex the formalities in the actual divorce proceedings; placing greater financial responsibilities towards a divorced woman; and finally, enlarging the wife's role in assent or dissent—and in assuming some mastery over her own fate as a married woman.

● *Enlarging cases of prohibition of divorce:* One example of the absolute prohibition of divorce involved the wife who had become insane and would thus be unable to take care of herself; another, of a wife taken captive: the rabbis obligated him to send even the dowry money to ransom her; a third, a child-bride.

● *Embellishing the formalities:* The complex set of rules attending the actual divorce process, too numerous to mention here, was spelled out in the Talmud (edited at the close of the fifth century), further refined in post-Talmudic rabbinic literature, and still apply today.

The bill of divorce (*get*) must be written in Aramaic by a scribe at the specific instruction of the husband and follow the Talmudic textual form, with only the details of the particular case filled in at the appropriate spaces. The central part of the *get* is the declaration by the husband: "I release and set aside you, my wife, in order that you may have authority over yourself to marry any man you desire....You are permitted to every man ....This shall be for you a bill of dismissal, a letter of release, a *get* of freedom...."

Great care was taken in writing the *get*. Two male witnesses had to sign the document. The husband had to present it to the wife, again in the presence of witnesses (usually the same two men). If this was impossible or impractical, he could appoint an agent of delivery. Upon receipt of the document, the woman handed it over to the *bet din* (the rabbinic court consisting of three males). They made a tear in it, symbolizing the relationship torn asunder and the conclusion of the legal transaction of divorce. The *bet din* filed the *get*.

The standard process of divorce was so exact and so detailed that those in attendance had to be experts at it. The real purpose of the complexity was to bring the couple into contact with the rabbinic court whose members understood their function as extending far beyond that of interpreting the law; they used their offices to try to effect a reconciliation. Furthermore, a significant effect of this procedural change was ultimately to undermine the notion of absolute right. In practice as well as in the popular mind, the husband now had to look to the rabbinic court for sanction.

● *Enlarging the husband's financial responsibilities:* These responsibilities, incorporated into the *ketubah* (marriage contract), entitled the wife to a return of her dowry and any property she had brought with her into marriage, plus support until she remarried. The *ketubah* protected her interests during the marriage as well; the husband was obligated to provide for her according to her station in life, to pay her medical and dental bill, to ransom her from captivity, and provide her proper burial (*Ketubot 4:4-9; b 5a*).

The Talmud did not formalize the standard *ketubah* text. It did establish a minimum level of recompense; beyond that, it allowed many variations. Throughout the ages, there have been examples of tailor-made *ketubot*. In several recently discovered *ketubot* that are more than 1000 years old, the wife stipulated that her husband must grant her a divorce if he takes a concubine. It is clear that some women negotiated their own conditions for a viable marriage.

● *Wife's rights of consent:* The theoretical right of the husband to "put away" his wife, continually eroded throughout rabbinic times, was formally limited by the *halachic* decree of Rabbi Gershom of Mayence early in the eleventh century that a woman not be divorced except by her consent. The woman's will now carried legal force.

Although the rabbis did not have the will or the strength to make a *takkanah* (a formal rabbinic decree) which would have granted the woman a greater equality in divorce matters, nevertheless they did try to protect her and to limit the situations in which she was vulnerable to abuse. Some grounds entitling the wife to sue for a divorce were quite sensitive to her needs, among them her sexual satisfaction. In the case of the husband's refusal to to meet her conjugal rights, if she did not want to exercise her option for divorce, he could be fined, week by week (*Ketubot 61b-62b*). Impotence was also legitimate grounds for divorce, with the burden of proof upon the man (*Yevamot 65b*).

A woman was also entitled to a divorce if: her husband had a serious disease or a continual bad odor from his occupation (like gathering dung or tanning hides) (*Ketubot 7:9*); he did not support her in the style to which she had been accustomed or, if wealthy, in the proper manner for a man of his means (*Ketubot 5:8,9*);

The divorce ritual as pictured in a 1748 text. 1. Writing the *get*. 2. Reading it aloud. 3. Throwing the *get* to the husband 4. Husband throwing the *get* to the wife

if he beat her (*Rama Even Haezer 154:3*), she wanted to live in the Holy Land or move from one city in Eretz Israel to Jerusalem and he refused to follow her or to remain there with here (*Ketubot 110b*); he behaved licentiously, *i.e.*, frequented prostitutes (*Rama E.H. 154:1*).

What about the right of a wife to sue for divorce? The germ of such notion existed in the Biblical law regarding a bondwoman-cum-wife whose husband marries another (*see box*). If he didn't continue to provide her with food, clothing and sexual satisfaction, then she had the right to go out free from debt without a financial settlement, but with a divorce. This bill of divorce was assumed to have been mandated by a court or by the elders because a bondwoman obviously had no power in her own right. It was assumed that if a bondwoman had the *right* to a divorce under such conditions how much more so did a wife who came into the marriage as a free woman.

The Bondwoman

If a man sells his daughter to be a maidservant... if her master takes another wife, he shall not diminish the food, clothing and conjugal rights due (his first wife). And if he does not provide these, then she shall go free, without money (*Exodus 21: 7-11*).

The notion that marriage placed the husband under contractual obligations was further expanded in rabbinic times. If a man did not fulfill certain conditions that made the marriage viable, he was liable to a divorce suit from his wife. She could go to a *bet din*, present her case, and obtain a court decree compelling him to appear to answer the charges. If the charges were justified, the court intervened to compel him to fulfill his obligations towards his wife. If he failed to do so then the court could resort to various economic or social sanctions to coerce him to grant a divorce. The law still maintained, however, that he was doing this "of his own free will." By such legal fiction the old theory of man's right remained intact while the wife's real power increased.

Thus, a pattern emerges. In the case of the husband, the original right was open-ended and absolutely private, but the historical development of the law served to continually limit it. In the case of the wife, there was but an initial hint of some sort of rights. As *halachah* developed through the post-Biblical generations, wider powers accrued to her. This unmistakable pattern is sufficient to refute the simple-minded charges that the rabbis seized every opportunity to keep women powerless. Quite the reverse is true: considering all the power the rabbis had what with the Biblical guidelines and their own transfer of male authority from one generation to another—there is an impressive degree of sensitivity and benevolence in the unfolding of the law. The growing set of obligations of the husband to his wife and the increasing formalization of her rights to redress through the *bet din* are clear indicators of an attitude of concern for the women

Still, we are left with some large and serious problems. First, instead of grappling directly with the sexist principle that only a man had the right to divorce, the rabbis used various legal fictions to subvert its original intent. The exclusive right as derived from the Bible was never challenged or abolished; it was simply chisled away bit by bit. As a result, the rabbinic authorities in any given generation could revert back to the original notion of the husband's power over the wife.

A perfect example can be found in a qualification recorded in Rabbenu Gershom's decree that a man could not divorce his wife against her free will: if a recalcitrant wife refused a divorce or was physically unable to accept it, a husband had only to deposit the writ with the rabbinic court, announce his intention to divorce widely, and thus receive approval of 100 rabbis (*Even Haezer 1:10*). Thus, here as in other instances, some of the more positive decisions concerning women could be withdrawn or tempered on the principle that the ancient legal right of the husband could not be abrogated (*Maimonides, Laws of Divorce 10:23*). Somehow, the *halachah* managed to find a way to get around the Biblical and Talmudic requirement that the husband hand the wife a bill of divorce; one need not wonder too long why the *halachah* did not find a parallel loophole to allow a wife release from a similar situation.

That brings us the second problem: that a woman is not empowered to present a *get* to her husband and thereby divorce *him*. A legal theory supporting this is that since he is the one who creates the marriage bond, he must also be the one to sever it. There is no proceeding in Jewish law whereby a divorce is granted by a court in the absence or without the consent of the husband. Thus, there is great potential for abuse built into this law—and there have been, in each generation, countless sinister tales of resistant husbands' extortion and delay.

Moreover, this aspect of the law has led to the tragic situation of the *agunah*

Eve Kessler

("anchored wife"), a woman whose husband has deserted her, or is insane, missing, or presumed dead (though his death has not been verified by the requisite two witnesses). In every generation, the rabbis tried to alleviate the plight of the *agunah*. Even today, many individual cases remain in Jewish communities all over the world. And despite the compassion and gentleness of the many rabbis who resolve individual cases, women testify to a certain humiliating quality inherent in the basic notion of *agunah* and in the very process of release from this status.

Finally, in certain ways, the modern, open society has worked to woman's disadvantage. In the closed, relatively autonomous Jewish communities of the past, the religious authorities and lay leaders could coerce and level sanctions against a man whose wife brought a legitimate suit of divorce; in modern societies outside Israel, however, a rabbinic court has authority only over those who voluntarily place themselves under its jurisdiction. Even in Israel, there are men who have chosen to remain in the jail to which the *bet din* sentenced them for refusing to grant a divorce, rather than free their wives.

Thus, in an attempt to close the gap between men's power and women's powerlessness in the divorce issue, the rabbis tried hard, but not hard enough. It would have taken little more collective maturity to close the gap altogether, to create a situation of real equality under the law. The rabbis assumed wide powers of interpretation—and even of innovation—in situations where the general needs of the community called for accommodation rather than rationalization of an unwieldly situation. Failure of contemporary rabbis to acknowledge that past improvements in divorce law are but part of a continuous process—"on the way to becoming"—leads one to conclude that, in their heart of hearts, many would like the gap to exist, apologetist platitudes notwithstanding.

Several solutions have evolved in modern times. Reform Judaism approves of civil divorce. But the Orthodox consider a woman divorced according to Reform practices an *ayshet ish*, another man's wife (since she has no "proper" *get*), and she is forbidden to marry an Orthodox or Conservative Jew. Moreover, the children of her second marriage are considered *mamzerim* (bastards, born of an adulterous union) and are forbidden to marry into a *halachic* community. Conservative Judaism has added a clause to its *ketubah* giving the *bet din* powers to end the marriage, with the additional provision that the secular courts can be turned to for enforcement should the husband not live up to the agreement. In the Orthodox community, Rabbi Zev Falk has set forth many precedents which traditional *halachists* could follow today. Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits' proposed solution rests basically on a conditional clause inserted in the marriage contract, which allows for the dissolution of the relationship (rather than the couple's divorce) if the spouses have been living apart for a specified length of time.

There has been great resistance in the Orthodox community to these and any other proposals for change. Therefore, we have today a situation unprecedented in the history of Jewry—we have four sets of divorce law, as if we were several different religious communities.

What remains to be done is to formulate a rabbinic decree or firm qualifications of the existing *halachah* that will both eliminate any potential for abuse of women and will be acceptable to and unite all branches of Judaism. Achieving both means that all Jews will have to accept that there is something distinctive about being a Jew and living under Jewish law. It means that we all have a heightened sense of awareness that marriage and divorce and every other event in our lives should be properly articulated as Jewish events, experiences within the framework of a holy community. It means that the branches of Judaism will have to sit down together to work out a mutually acceptable solution, each reconciling the others as part of *Klal* (people of) *Israel*. It also means that, given the institutional status quo and entrenched interests, Jewish women of every political and religious shade will have to pressure and politicize until the entire community accepts a unifying and equitable law.

It is hard to project what would be the optimal form of revision. Perhaps it will be along the lines of Berkovits' conditional clause in the marriage contract, perhaps it will empower the wife to write and deliver the *get*. It would be dishonest of me not to admit to a sense of ambivalence, a hesitation—even a fear (trembling)—as I speak of fundamental change from the Biblical principle. For I am emotionally and theologically rooted in this community that, at most, allows itself to speak in hushed tones about gradual change over a period of two millenia. On on the one hand, I feel a preference to call for a revision which would serve the two functions yet involve the least change in the basic structure of *halachah*. On the other hand, I must ask whether this halfway step would be doing a disservice to women two or three generations from now. Then again, I am not unmindful of the fact that the divinity of the Torah has remained so strong throughout our history precisely because the rabbis were so careful not to "forbid what was permitted or permit what was forbidden" in the Torah However, still another part of me feels compelled to press, to politicize, to call for change with absolute certainty. The strongest motivating force is bound up with Jewish tradition itself.

Recently I addressed a traditional community on the subject of which areas of the *halachah* could incorporate the new needs and expectations of women. After I had finished, an old friend, a former pulpit rabbi turned businessman, got up and said, "Not everyone's needs will be met by every law. Some people will have to suffer under some laws. That's *halachah*! That's it!"

Leaving aside that inaccurate perception of *halachah*, men can no longer decide that it's all right for women to suffer indiscriminately. It is inevitable that there will always be inequities, injustices, imbalances in every divorce situation; that is the nature of the dissolution of a human relationship. But the law itself should not discriminate against one sex. If there is one woman in each generation who suffers unnecessarily as a result of the law, then the law is biased against all women. To one who believes that Judaism is the most ethical and sensitive of religions, to one who believes that from Revelation on, Judaism has continually moved towards its own best values, a change which would bring about a greater equality should be articulated not in categories of change, but rather as part of the organic growth of a holy community as it moves through history. ☰

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Crimes Against Women in Israel

Testimony at the International Tribunal, Brussels

by Joanne Yaron

A little over a year ago, 2,000 women from 30 countries convened the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, in Brussels. Two Israeli feminists participated: Joanne Yaron and then Knesset member Marcia Freedman. We have excerpted below from the testimony Yaron gave there.

The concept of woman as woman, rather than as human being, is probably the greatest crime against women in Israel. It is from this concept, enshrined in the so-called Women's Equal Rights Law of 1951, that all social and legally sanctioned crimes against women spring.

It is because of this concept that there exist so-called protective laws for women, which are in reality disabilities; or so-called extra privileges, which are in reality obstacles. It is because of this concept that women are trained from birth to fulfill what is considered their primary role of wife and mother, rather than to fulfill themselves.

Even Golda Meir could not escape. During the zenith of her power, the press found it necessary to stress her cake-baking skills, shopping habits, and concern for her grandchildren—as though without these homemaking capabilities her role as Prime Minister was somehow regarded as incomplete.

It is because of this concept that less than a third of the working-age women in Israel work outside their homes, and these mainly in sex-stereotyped service jobs, for less wages than their male colleagues, and with less or even no chance of advancement. It is because of this concept that the various women's organizations, even the Working Women's Movement—despite its 600,000 members, and its existence for over 50 years (it was established in pre-State days)—have never dared to realistically challenge the established order.

There is no doubt that the source of this paternalistic attitude towards women is rooted in and strengthened by Orthodox religious law. In Israel all matters regarding one's personal status, *i.e.*, marriage and divorce and related subjects, come under the jurisdiction of the religious courts, depending on one's religion, and one must have a religious identification. This situation was inherited by the British Mandatory Government from the Ottoman rulers of the area, and adopted by the Israeli Government with the establishment of the State.

For the majority of Israel's population, this means Orthodox Jewish religious law, whether or not the citizen is religious or Orthodox. In the rabbinical courts, man and woman do not have equal standing. This is based on the concept of woman as man's property. In the marriage ceremony he consecrates her, while she remains passive. In case of divorce, he gives her the divorce; she receives it. And, if a man is unwilling or unable to give his wife a divorce, there is no way to release her.

Because of their unequal position, many women often resort to buying divorces from recalcitrant husbands, who

According to Jewish religious law—which is the civil law code of Israel—if a woman is left a childless widow, her brother-in-law has what amounts to the right of first refusal. She cannot remarry until he has released her from the obligation to marry *him*. Although the Israeli movie "I Love You Rosa" has the widow and her young brother-in-law living together happily ever after, many present-day situations have less happy endings, with brothers-in-law extorting money from the widows before they'll forfeit their claims.

fully realize their greater power. They, however, are doubtless much better off than one woman who is forever tied to a known sex deviate who refuses to grant her a divorce, or another who is deaf as a result of battering by her husband, who prefers to beat her rather than divorce her.

According to the Jewish law, a man may marry a second wife while still married to the first. While it is true that bigamy is against the law in Israel, legislators included a paragraph allowing a man to marry a second wife if he receives a permit from the rabbinical court. Such a permit is granted if a woman is unable to receive the divorce (insane, disappeared, etc.), or if she is unwilling to, despite court directive.

This, in effect, is a divorce forced on the woman, an act that cannot be done to a man. He may be imprisoned for not granting his wife a divorce as directed, and this has happened, though rarely, but she cannot be released from the marriage until he agrees. There is a case of a man serving a long term for a felony who refuses to give his wife a divorce out of spite, and there is nothing that can be done. If a husband is insane or disappears or has failed to return from battle but no remains are found, his wife is forever tied to him.

If a woman is married to a man, whether or not they are living together, she is still his property, and she may not form a liaison with any other man. If she does, she is in danger of losing all her rights to her part of their joint property and even custody of the children. If children result from her relationship with the other man, they are considered bastards and may never marry within the community (or outside it either, since there is no interfaith marriage). And if she finally gets her divorce, she may not marry her lover. This was brought out in a recent case in Beersheba, where the woman has been separated from her husband for a long time, and formed a relationship with another man; and when she became pregnant, they decided to marry. When in ignorance she asked the rabbinical court to rush the divorce through since she was pregnant, they obliged, but also added to her bill of divorcement the fact that she was not allowed to marry the man named as her lover.

Not so the man. He may live apart from his wife, form a relationship with any single woman of his choosing, have children with her, and eventually marry her when he is divorced. Even if they never marry, the children are legal and are entitled to the same rights as his other children. The woman, who is considered a common-law wife, also has maintenance and property rights, but should he tire of her, too, she must accept the divorce according to the terms he offers, since they were not legally married.

The traditional *halitzah* ceremony, whereby a childless widow is released from the obligation to enter into a levirate marriage with her brother-in-law. The ceremony itself, still practiced, is a humiliating one for the woman, involving removing the brother-in-law's shoe as is shown in this old engraving.

Woman's position is still lowered by the fact that she may be declared rebellious by the rabbinical courts and therefore lose her maintenance, property and other rights. A woman may not leave the joint domicile without a rabbinical permit lest she be declared rebellious. She may be declared rebellious if her husband declares, and the rabbis believe, that she did not sew buttons for him, cook, keep house, have sexual relations, and a long list of other wifely duties.

This happened in the case of a Tel Aviv couple. After 26 years of unhappy marriage, the wife applied for a property settlement as the first step to a divorce. In finding against the wife's claim to joint property, the judge (male) noted that for a housewife to claim joint property she must prove "cooperation." The husband said that his wife "had never sewed a button. The children came to me to sew buttons. And as for running the kitchen... I was jealous when I saw how the neighbors ate ...as a homemaker my wife was terrible." The wife lost the case for not having cooperated. She therefore did not have joint property rights and in addition, she had to pay the IL. 3,500 court costs. The recently-promulgated law on joint property, which is supposed to relieve such situations, requires a prior agreement by the couple, something young newlyweds rarely do. In any event, it is only enforced on couples married since 1974. This concept of woman as man's property means that he is the true head of the household. Even if the house was purchased by her, he may refuse entry to her friends and family.

Yet another debilitating situation to a woman is that she passes to her brother-in-law if her husband dies without issue. Release from this levirate marriage involves all the same problems as divorce. The childless widow is "married" to her brother-in-law until he releases her. Childless means no living child. Many a brother-in-law uses this to extort money or property. The rabbinical courts, by the way, usually advise the widow to accede to her brother-in-law's demands. Sometimes the brother-in-law cannot give release because he cannot be found or is still a minor, which in religious terms means under 13 years old. One such case was a woman whose young husband also fell in battle, leaving his wife and a 3-year-old brother. Four years later, she wished to remarry and found she could not get release until the brother-in-law, now just 7 years old, reaches his 13th year.

The paternalistic/patriarchal attitudes that a woman in Israel lives under are obvious. She has little or no help from the police who see quarrels between spouses as family matters, or rabbinical courts where no woman can be a judge and where women are not considered valid witnesses. There remains a long road to equality in law and custom for Israel's women. 〓

A copy of the pamphlet from which this article was taken is available for $2.50 from Joanne Yaron, 1 Yosef Sapir St., Kiryat Krene Ramat Gan, Israel

The Crippler

by Diane Levenberg

In Kherson Russia we had The Crippler
Cataracts of despair in two rheumy caverns
Himself a crippled craftsman
Working by the always burning *yahrzeit* candle
His tortuous hands now palsied and pained

The trees of the forest surrounding us
Guarding his wounded hut
Silent sentries observing this patient line
(That same line always repeated
Mournful refrain through cry-filled centuries
Ani Maamin Eli Eli)

Mothers holding children in terror-filled grip
The Crippler the means to keep
Their sons at home
These children would not fight
In the Czar's conscript army
Would not serve as Cantonist
A minimum of twenty years

"Bring the boy" he whispers
Vising shivering child
Blind hands encompassing
Face arms legs waist
"Two fingers on the right hand"
Bring the next boy
Caressing face arms legs
The right foot to be
Bent forever out of shape
The Crippler works quickly

I watch ten boys
Enter the room whole
I hear ten boys and
Their screams are echoed still
My turn and The Crippler
Examines my face
Sifts my hair
I feel holes in my body
Fathered by his touch

"A girl" he whispers
"Why a girl
I have never...
Not a girl"
"Do it" my mother hisses
"Do it
A whore in the Czar's army
To couple with *goyim*
Never will it be this one
The rabbi's daughter"

He cuts my hair
Crosses an eye
Pours lead in my left leg
And my face slowly freezes
Into the ugliness of this agony

"My mother is dead
This is my father's jealous wife"
I scream to be heard
But in the windowless room
I stand alone amid a
Minyan of maimed boys
And The Crippler continues
A Khazarian thrust and
The blood between my legs
Adds to the pool slowly
Wasting the wood of the floor

Years later we hear of The Healer
Some never reach her and for
Five years I search
Half the world
The old woman
Like the Witch of Endor
Necromances the soul
To spirit the body
My hair has grown back
We are still working on the leg
I still walk very slowly
My gaze is steady fixed
In fact at times
I can look right through you

But the heart is beyond
The work of The Healer
And the heart still cries
It may never stop
The Healer has advised
"But this heart" she added
"Pumps both blood and tears"

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Border by Shoshanna Walker after drawings by Reginald Knowl

How Was This Passover Different from All Other Passovers?

Edited by Reena Friedman

As we reflect upon our recent celebration of Pesach, many of us may admit that, much as we love the holiday, we felt somewhat uncomfortable with the traditional seder and haggadah. The haggadahs used by most families omit any reference to the significant roles played by women in the Exodus story. The very language of the haggadah excludes women. Furthermore, the female members of the family have generally been more concerned with the preparation of the Passover meal than with taking an active part in the seder itself.

In the past few years, the seder, like many Jewish ritual observances, has come under the scrutiny of feminists who seek to enhance the participation of women in Jewish life. Recent revisions of the haggadah have attempted, in various ways, to restore women to their rightful positions in the account of our national liberation. A number of these feminist haggadahs were compiled specifically for all-women's seders; others were intended for family use.

Certain features of the traditional haggadah have proven themselves particularly amenable to adaptation. The "four sons" passage has been modified to read "four children"; some altered this section to deal with four different women's approaches to Jewish feminism. Nearly all the seders substitute a negative version of the popular *Dayenu* (*It Would Have Sufficed Us*), thereby reiterating that the liberation of Jewish women is yet to be realized. Following the recitation of the ten plagues which befell the Egyptians, many feminist seders include a discussion of ten "plagues," or "injustices," suffered by Jewish women. Finally, the authors of various haggadahs have written statements relating the traditional Passover symbols (such as matzah and *karpas* (greens) to their own struggles as Jewish women.

The concept of a "feminist seder" involves a great deal more than a revision of the language and content of the haggadah. These seders afford many women the opportunity to lead or actively participate in the ceremony for the first time. However, Pesach presents feminists with a dilemma in that this is a uniquely family-oriented festival. Thus, separate woman's seders, which often focus solely upon the Jewish woman's struggle for equality, have been criticized for their exclusive nature

Pamala Cook

Elizabeth Mellicker leading her family seder.

by some members of the Jewish community. In an effort to overcome this clash of interests, the idea of the "third night feminist seder" has evolved.

The experiences of this past Pesach suggest numerous opportunities for change, with respect to both women's participation in the seder and the material of the haggadah itself. A variety of possibilities are offered by the authors of excerpts below, arranged according to the structure of the traditional haggadah. The new haggadahs must not, however, be regarded as the final word. There is much room for experimentation in a number of areas; the "Hallel" (Songs of Praise) section of the haggadah is one example. The process of change must be ongoing if the seder is to remain as vital a Jewish experience in the future as it has been in the past.

Feminism and the Seder

During the Passover festival we commemorate the Exodus from Egyptian bondage, the crucial event in our history which paved the way for the emergence of Israel as a people. At this season we do not merely express our gratitude for the past event of liberation; we celebrate that freedom as a living and personal experience. The Passover haggadah, the narration of the Exodus story, serves as a means of transmitting this heritage to present and future generations.

As Jewish women who are just beginning to develop a new sense of individual freedom, Passover bespeaks an immediate symbolism with which we can easily identify. Liberation, the rebirth of spring commemorated by the chanting of the Song of Songs, the renewal of family bonds represented by the communally shared meal are themes which strike deeply at the core of our being. Yet the seder excludes us, traditionally limiting our role to participant—never leader—and narrating a history which neglects the heritage of the women of Israel.

Such sentiments have led to the creation of the feminist seder. Insofar as the goal of such a Seder is to include the experience of women, it moves in a positive and constructive direction. Many contemporary haggadot have given voice to the numerous oppressions and liberations of our people. But insofar as the feminist seder focuses "exclusively" upon the history and the liberation of the Jewish woman, it does an injustice to both the meaning of Passover and of Jewish feminism

The significance of Passover lies not only in the reenactment of the drama of enslavement, but in an understanding of the role that oppression came to play in the consciousness of our people. The recollection of Egyptian bondage served as the basis for the ethical legislation contained in the Torah. Out of the embitterment of slavery, came a deep respect for human life and dignity.

Similarly, the significance of Jewish feminism lies not solely in the narration of a history of exclusion, but in the direction toward which that shared experience might yet lead in the creation of a feminist ethic. Thus, out of our frustration with the lack of recognition given women in the past, we mustn't evolve a situation in which we respond in kind by being exclusivistic. The seder which speaks only for the Jewish woman, centers purely upon her enslavement and liberations, weakens our bond of solidarity with the whole of Jewish civilization and people. A haggadah inspired by the principles of Jewish feminism should not limit the message of Passover but serve to expand it. It should not separate us from *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people), but forge the link in which women are viewed as equal partners in suffering and in liberation.

—*Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso*
(*New York*)

Eve Kessler

Women on the sidelines at a 14th-century seder. Six hundred years later, women are starting to move to the head of the table.

Model seders

Eva Fogelman, Cambridge, Mass., believes that women should not hold separate seders unless these are conducted on a "third night." However, she has suggested that women organize a pre-Pesach "model seder." This would enable the participants to study the haggadah and to develop feminist innovations which might subsequently be incorporated into the various family seders.

Fogelman has also emphasized the fact that Pesach, as a family holiday, leaves a lasting impression on children. She maintains that it is the ideal time to present children with more egalitarian sexual role models.

Sandy Winters and other members of the Baltimore Jewish Feminist Organization conducted "model seder" sessions this year for women who are single parents. These women were referred to the Jewish Feminist Organization by the local Jewish Community Center. The women had been apprehensive about leading seders for themselves and their children with no male family members present. The sessions acquainted the women with the haggadah and encouraged them to conduct joint seders.

In Pursuit of Justice

Women are the original Jews of silence. Embracing feminism and Judaism with equal intensity, I teeter back and forth, an agonizing equilibrist. And Passover has been the most teetery time in recent years. I love the holiday with a mad passion, but, of course, it doesn't give women the time of day.

Or didn't. This year, I got hold of a copy of "A Jewish Woman's Haggadah" by Aviva Cantor Zuckoff. With this in one hand and Ben Shahn's traditional haggadah in the other, my daughters and granddaughters gathered to see if we could evoke the exultation of the old with the simple justice of the new in an aesthetically pleasing weave.

In Aviva's outline, each cup of wine serves as a salute, a kind of triumphant toast to Jewish women of valor. The first cup was dedicated to the brave midwives who opposed the Pharaoh. The second cup honored the Jewish fighters in the Resistance. One of my daughters was moved to tears by lines written by Hannah Senesh shortly before she was executed. The third cup saluted the women pioneers of Israel. The fourth honored our Jewish sisters, "struggling to find new and beautiful ways to say 'I am a Jew.'"

In all, it was an amazing experience. I, for instance, felt far more responsibility for the words and tone of the celebration than I did for the simmering roast or wait-

ing salad. (Where would the ruler of the universe have our consciousness centered, in our kitchens or on the Exodus?)

The big question, what of our men? we have not yet answered. We invited them. They declined, feeling, as one said, like an intruder. In one way we were grateful. Taking over the familiar role of seder leader makes one feel like a lowly employee posturing in the boss's chair. But what of next time when we feel more confident of our abilities and have done more special reading?

My hope is we can have an integrated seder, using additions from the Jewish Woman's Haggadah and any others our men wish to write. True, it will take a bit longer—but doesn't the traditional seder consist of layer after layer of additions?

—*Elizabeth Mellicker*
(Kansas City, Mo.)

Lighting the Candles

The Berkeley haggadah inserted a recitation of Hannah Senesh's poem, "Blessed is the Match," before the lighting of the Passover candles. (This translation from the Hebrew is from the Los Angeles haggadah.)

Blessed the match that was burned
And ignited flames!
Blessed the flame that blazed up
In the secret places of the heart.
Blessed the heart that throbbed its
last beat in honor.
Blessed the match that was burned and
ignited flames.

Karpas (Greens)

Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, New York, said the following upon dipping the karpas, *a leafy green vegetable, into the salt water:*

Why do we dip the *karpas*, this leafy green vegetable which symbolizes growth, the renewal of life that comes with liberation, into a bowl of salty water, which represents the tears we shed under oppression and slavery? We do this to reaffirm that to liberate ourselves fully, we first have to touch the depths of our suffering and bitterness and to share our tears with each other just as we share the salt water tonight. Chinese women called this "speaking bitterness."

Bread of Affliction

The Brooklyn seder added these words:

This is matzah, the bread of rebellion that our foremothers baked and ate in a time when they had to be organizing more and cooking less. We eat it to remind ourselves that, like our foremothers, we can and will overcome our bondage—that we and our sisters and our daughters will be free women.

We Were Slaves in Egypt

Batya Bauman conducted her annual seder for Jewish and non-Jewish women at a retreat in upstate New York. She added the following words after "We were slaves...".

Just as ancient Israel gave up the security of Egyptian bondage and went forth into a hostile desert for the sake of freedom, many lesbians are emerging from the bondage of secrecy and pretension to openness and freedom to be oneself at all times, even in a hostile environment. One may have momentary yearnings for the security of the closet, just as the Jews in the desert had yearnings to return to the security of *their* former state. Freedom has a price. But freedom to live in dignity is worth the price.

She Who Stood Fast

Ve'hee she'amda *can be translated as: And it was* she *who stood fast for our ancestors and for us." Several haggadahs, among them the Chicago seder, recall the bravery of Jewish women in all ages, beginning with the two midwives, Shifra and Pu'ah in Egypt:*

Pharaoh, in the time-honored pattern of oppressors, tried to get Jews to collaborate in murdering their own people. He summoned Shifra and Pu'ah and commanded them to kill newborn Jewish males at birth and to report the birth of Jewish females so they could be raised as prostitutes....The midwives did not carry out Pharaoh's command. Instead of murdering the infants, they took special care of them. When Pharaoh demanded an accounting, the midwives said that the Jewish women gave birth before they arrived.

The Ten Plagues

The Los Angeles haggadah looks at each plague as a symbol of "the terrible and awesome things visited upon our foremothers, sisters and ourselves." For example:

Darkness—One of the most destructive factors in our herstory is the plague of darkness—the darkness we were kept in, [ignorance] of our Jewish tradition and history.... We have been kept in darkness about our foremothers and their strengths, of [knowledge]... of women of independence who did not live traditionally-sanctioned lifestyles....

It Would (Not) Have Sufficed Us

The Broner/Nimrod haggadah rewrote the Dayenu *to read* Lo Dayenu, *"it would not have sufficed us": In this haggadah, the language is changed, with the Shechena (the feminine aspect of God) substituted for the traditional male references to divinity.*

If the Shechena had brought us forth from bondage and had not educated us, it would not have sufficed us.

If She had educated us and had not given us opportunity to work, it would not have sufficed us.

If She had given us opportunity to work and not allowed us to advance, *lo dayenu.*

If we were allowed to advance at work but had to perform housewifely duties as well, *lo dayenu.*

If we were helped by our families but hindered by civil law, *lo dayenu.*

If we were aided by rabbinical decree and treated with dignity, *dayenu, dayenu,* it suffices us.

When Israel Came Out of Egypt

Lucy Y. Steinitz, Chicago, suggested that Miriam be included in the haggadah. The Broner/Nimrod haggadah tells of Miriam's role in the Exodus:

When... it was time for the Exodus, Miriam sang and danced her people to victory. The House of Israel sang a song of freedom to the sound of Miriam's tambourine. The women gathered around her

Pamala Cook

Rachel Levy, granddaughter of Elizabeth Mellicker, asking the Four Questions.

and they mocked those who cried... "We would rather be slaves to the Egyptians than die here in the Wilderness."

Miram Ha Nevia
Miriam from the House of Levi
Soon will come to us
With timbrel and song
Miriam our prophetess
Will dance with us.

Charoset (Nuts and Apple Mixture)

In the Berkeley seder, the following was recited when participants dipped the maror *(bitter herbs) into the* charoset*:*

The *charoset*, a mixture of apples, nuts, wine and spice, represents the mixture of clay and straw from which we made bricks during our bondage. It also recalls to our mind the women of Israel who bore their children in secret beneath the apple trees of Egypt, and, like the apple tree that first produces fruit and then sprouts leaves to protect the fruit, our heroic mothers first bore children without any assurance of security or safety. This beautiful and militant devotion sweetened the misery of slavery. Even as we dip our bitter herbs into the *charoset*, the pattern of our celebration is the mixture of the bitter and the sweet, sadness and joy, of tales of shame that end in praise. And when we see the tragedy of our own time, we sweeten this bitter taste with the thought of the liberation that is to come.

Bread/Matzah and Roses

Before the blessing of Hamotzee *on bread, a story about Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev was quoted from the* Jewish Liberation Haggadah*:*

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev discovered that the girls who kneaded the dough for the matzah drudged from early morning until late at night. Then he cried aloud to the congregation gathered in the House of Prayer: "Those who hate Israel accuse us of baking the unleavened bread with the blood of Christians. But no, we bake it with the blood of Jews!" The rabbi pronounced the matzah *treif* (unkosher) because it was produced through *oshek*, the oppression of workers.

The Berkeley haggadah included communal singing of "Bread and Roses," a women's union song written by James Oppenheim during the mill strikes of 1912.

As we come marching, marching,
unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing
their ancient song of bread
Small art and love and beauty

Anne Frank

their drudging spirits knew
Yes, it's bread that we fight for,
but we fight for roses, too!

Pour Out Your Wrath

Several haggadahs included memorials to the victims of the Holocaust and called attention to the women who fought in the Resistance. An entry from the Diary *of Anne Frank was added by Judith Manelis, New Jersey, in* The Jewish Family Haggadah. *The Los Angeles haggadah includes a translation of Hirsh Glick's Partisan Song, written in memory of Vitke Kempner, who participated in the first attack on the Nazis by Vilna ghetto partisans:*

... A woman, a jacket and a beret
Clutching a gun in her hand
A woman whose face is soft as velvet
Watched for the enemy's caravan.

A truck came rumbling through the forest
She took aim and then she fired.
A truck full with ammunition
Was stopped with her own strength....

Nirtzah

The Nirtzah *(conclusion of the seder) is generally the place where feminist seders stress the theme of sisterhood, as in the Flashperson/Sablove haggadah:*

We hope that this evening's seder has helped to strengthen our desire to gather together again to recall our past and present and to look to our future lives as women... as sisters.

"And Ruth said, 'Entreat me not to leave thee and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge....'" *(The Book of Ruth)*

Next Year in Jerusalem!

Several haggadahs inserted material here on Soviet Jewry and on the women of Israel. The Third Night Feminist Haggadah *incorporated Hannah Senesh's poem "We Gather Flowers" as an expression of Jewish sisterhood and love of* Zion

We gathered flowers in the fields
and mountains,
We breathed the fresh winds of spring,
We were drenched with the warmth
of the sun's rays
In our homeland, in our beloved home.

We go out to our sisters in exile,
To the suffering of winter,
to frost in the night.
Our hearts will bring tidings
of springtime,
Our lips sing the song of light.

(1944)

Sources

•Berkeley haggadah: *Pesach Haggadah: A Statement of Joyous Liberation. Women's Seder, Berkeley, Cal. 1973.* By Fayla Schwartz, Susie Coliver and Elaine Ayela. • Broner/Nimrod haggadah: *The Stolen Legacy.* By E.M. Broner and Naomi Nimrod. ©Copyright 1976. The book is dedicated to Dr. Phyllis Chesler "who housed the haggadah" the first time it was conducted. For complete text, send $5 to Helen Merrill Agency, 33 West 22 St., New York, N.Y. 10011. • Brooklyn seder: *This Year in Brooklyn: A Seder to Commemorate Ourselves.* By Bobbie Spalter-Roth. Published in *Off Our Backs*, Washington D.C., May 1973. • Chicago seder: *A Woman's Haggadah, 1973.* By Chicago Area Jewish Feminists. • Flashperson/Sablove haggadah: *Feminist Seder*, by Sherry Flashperson and Margaret Sablove. April 1973. • Berkeley, Brooklyn, Chicago, and Flashperson/Sablove seders are from collection of Maralee Gordon, Chicago, Ill. • *Jewish Liberation Haggadah.* By Aviva Cantor Zuckoff with Itzhak Epstein and Jerry Kirschen. © Copyright Jewish Liberation Project 1971, 1972. • *Jewish Women's Haggadah.* By Aviva Cantor Zuckoff. April 1973. • Los Angeles haggadah: *Women's Passover Seder 1977.* © Copyright 1977. Compiled by Sharon Abramowitz, Diane Gelon, Anna Rubin and Sheila Ruth. The haggadah contains material from women's seders held in L.A. during the past four years. • *Third Night Feminist Haggadah.* By Rhea C. Levy © Copyright 1976.

The Passover section was compiled and edited by Reena Sigman Friedman, a graduate student in American Jewish History at Columbia University who is particularly interested in the history of Jewish women in America.

Tsena Rena*

* "Go and see" (Seek enlightenment) is the title of the Yiddish-language women's Bible with the portion of the week and folk tales. Tsena Rena enabled women to educate themselves about the most basic resource —the Bible.

Publications

Siddur Nashim, a Sabbath Prayer Book for Women, emphasizing the tender, nurturing aspects of God, has been written by Naomi Janowitz and Maggie Wenig of the Brown University Women's Minyan. The all-English prayer book follows the general order of the Sabbath service and includes original psalms and a prayer on menstruation. It is written in modern poetic language identifying God as "She," bringing a whole new spirit to prayer. The authors hope the prayer book will be part of a process of Jewish women's rethinking and rewriting of prayer. The experimental draft form, 96 mimeographed pages, is available for $8. Make checks payable to Maggie Wenig and mail to

Maggie Wenig
Box 5030, Brown University
Providence, RI 02912

The final issue of *Lilith's Rib*, former newsletter of the North American Jewish Feminist Organization, was published in November, 1975. Anyone interested in this 12-page collector's item, send one 13¢ stamp to

Lilith's Rib
P.O. Box 60142
Chicago, IL 60660

The Reform movement's new home prayer book, *Gates of the House*, by Rabbi Chaim Stern, makes some modest moves toward a less sexist language of worship. For example, "God of our fathers" is now "God of all generations." The prayer book, with Hebrew, English, and some transliteration, is simultaneously more traditional and more modern than the Reform home prayer book published in 1951. New additions include both a *Havdalah* service ushering out the Sabbath and a "Covenant of Life" ceremony welcoming a baby girl into Judaism on the eighth day after birth. *Gates of the House* runs 296 pages and costs $6.95 (leatherette gift edition, $7.50). From

UAHC Publications Dept.
838 Fifth Ave., Dept. L
New York, NY 10021

The American Jewish Committee has published a brief bibliography on "The Jewish Woman in the Community." The seven-page annotated pamphlet compiled by Library Director Cyma M. Horowitz covers a range of religious and organizational issues appearing over the past few years in books and magazine articles. Single copies are 25 cents from

American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56 St., Dept. L
New York, NY 10022

For do-it-yourselfers, the Task Force on Equality of Women in Judaism of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues has compiled a six-page "Glossary of Substitute Terminology." It lists the masculine terms commonly found in the Union Prayer Book (but applicable to almost every other prayer book as well) along with a sampling of major prayers and suggests substitute language. For example, "Almighty, Protector, Creator, Parent, Holy One," are suggested substitutes for "Lord" and "Father," and adding "Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel" is recommended wherever "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" appear. And, for the record, Rabbi Chaim Stern, editor of *Gates of the House*, says, "I am now persuaded that it is illegitimate to use masculine language about God." The "Glossary" is available without charge from

Annette Daum, Co-ordinator
Religious Action Department
New York Federation of Reform Synagogues
838 Fifth Avenue, Dept. L
New York, NY 10021

In Philadelphia, statistics on where women are—and aren't—are now available in *Bringing Women In: A Survey of the Evolving Role of Women in Jewish Organizational Life in Philadelphia*. Prepared by Rela Geffen Monson, the data include the percentage of boards with women officers, administrative positions filled by women and much more. The 15-page book prepared by the American Jewish Committee of Philadelphia's Committee on the Role of Women in the Jewish Community is available for $1.20 from

The American Jewish Committee of Philadelphia
1502 Fox Building
1612 Market St., Dept. L
Philadelphia, PA 19103

An anthology of the poetry of Jewish women through the ages is being compiled by Marcia Spiegel of Rolling Hills Estates in California. Along with modern poems, it will include poetry from the second century B.C.E. along with women's poetry preserved from the 12th, 17th and 18th centuries, and Holocaust writing. One of the themes that has emerged is women talking to God, occasionally to praise but

more often in anger. Ms. Spiegel hopes that the anthology will be one step in helping Jewish women see their potential beyond that of the usual Jewish stereotypes. Any profits from the anthology will go to help the Temple Menorah Sisterhood of Redondo Beach, CA to continue Jewish education programs. Poetry is invited for possible inclusion in the anthology. Poems can be sent to

Marcia Spiegel
4856 Ferncreek Dr.
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

"Who Hast Not Made Me A Man": The Movement for Equal Rights for Women in American Jewry by Anne Lapidus Lerner is an extremely useful study of the progress of the Jewish women's movement in all areas of American Jewish life—the Orthodox, Reform and Conservative branches of American Judaism, Jewish organizations and schools. The author, Instructor in Modern Hebrew Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, concludes that the American Jewish women's movement "must be confronted and accommodated to ensure the survival of American Jewry." The article appears in the 1977 edition of the American Jewish Year Book, and is available in pamphlet form for $1 from

The American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 St. Dept. L
New York, NY 10022

Women to Women

The Boston Jewish Feminist C-R Group, which developed out of the First National Jewish Women's Conference in 1973, will assist women in the area interested in forming a C-R group. Phone (617) 491-7131.

One of the women active in the group, Eva Fogelman, is leading an Experiential and Didactic Group on the Life Cycle of the Jewish Woman. For information on joining such a short-term group, phone (617) 731-2883.

Gabriela Landau

The Women's Minyan of St. Louis celebrated its first anniversary in February. They meet for traditional services the first Sabbath of each month at 6983 Cornell, University City, MO 63130. They welcome any information on Orthodox authorities who consider 10 women as constituting a *minyan* (*i.e.*, the group can include the *kedushah*, *barechu* and *kaddish* in their services). Write to

Phyllis Shapiro
7251 Princeton
St. Louis, MO 63130

Women interested in the Belgian Jewish Feminist Movement, G.R.A.F.E.J., should contact

Monique Chalude
177, avenue Armand Huysmans
1050 Brussels, Belgium
Telephone 6400499

The Berkeley Jewish Women's Alliance (BJWA) is organizing study groups exploring women's relation to the liturgy, women in Israel, and sexism in Jewish education. The BJWA, now in its second year, is also establishing a library and speakers' bureau. Women interested in BJWA activities should phone (415) 843-5283 or 548-6609.

A new women's *minyan* was recently formed at Harvard and Radcliffe. The *minyan* meets every other Sabbath for *Minchah* services and a discussion of a topic relating to Jewish women. Those interested should contact

Tamar Stern
18 Ware St. Apt. 23
Cambridge, MA 02138

If you've wanted to have a Bat Mitzvah but never had one, now's your chance. The New York Jewish Women's Center is planning a program to prepare women for Bat Mitzvah. The Center invites women in the New York area to help with programming suggestions for the coming year. This past year's programs included personal effectiveness training; exploration of our sexuality and sensuality; and Zero Population Growth and Jewish survival. Classes included surveys of the Jewish woman, historic and modern, and ritual skills. For information contact

New York Jewish Women's Center
299 Riverside Drive, Apt. 3D
New York, NY 10025
(212) 666-5340

Women in the Greater Hartford, Conn. area interested in Jewish women's consciousness raising groups should contact Sarina during the day at (203) 522-8265.

The New York Jewish Women's Center holds traditional, *halachic* women's services once a month at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday mornings at Congregation Shaare Zedek, 212 West 93rd St. (at West End Ave.). Services will continue during the summer. The center is also planning creative services not bound by *halachic* restrictions. For details, telephone (212) 666-5340.

Workshops on "The Jewish Woman—A Feminist Perspective" are being given in the Stamford University area by Nancy Imberman Tamler and Sherry Crandon-Graef. Both have MA's in Marriage, Family and Child Counseling. Ms. Tamler is a traditionally observant Jew integrating Judaism and feminism, and Ms. Crandon-Graef is a cultural Jew and feminist.

Their current series at Stanford Hillel's Lehrhaus Judaica, includes workshops on a new look at the Creation myth along with Biblical role models, women in the Talmudic era, and law and ritual. Their series at the South Peninsula Jewish Community Center is a more personal approach dealing with the stereotypes of the Jewish Mother and the Jewish American Princess, relationships with other Jewish women, and the sharing of poetry, food and an original concluding ritual.

Future workshops are planned in addition to a women's *minyan* for Stanford University women. For information contact

Nancy Imberman Tamler
4164 Campana Dr.
Palo Alto, CA 94306
(415) 493-3426

Mellow Drama

Sally Fox is a 24-year-old free-lance playwright and dramatist who performs her plays and monologues for Jewish women's groups and other organizations across the country. The group provides the topic, mood, time limit (and fee) and Fox writes and performs a play that will excite and motivate the audience. Long Island-born Fox has performed at temples, university classes, restaurants, Hillels, feminist groups and women's organizations, including B'nai B'rith Women. For further information and play requisition forms write

Sally Fox
POB 3309 O.S.U. STA.
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Storyteller Peninnah Schram, well-known to children who have heard her spin out folk tales and legends at the Jewish Museum, the Yeshiva University Museum and on radio, can be heard on the new record "A Storyteller's Journey." The five stories illustrating five of the 10 commandments are from Molly Cone's children's book *Who Knows Ten?* The stories avoid the usual Jewish stereotypes. The storyteller's favorite, "The Princess Who Wanted to See God," illustrates the second commandment, "Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me." The record costs $5.95 and the cassette, $6.95 plus 65¢ postage. (New York City and State residents add the appropriate tax.) Order from

Peninnah Schram

Pomegranate Records Dept. L
525 West End Ave., Suite 8C
New York, NY 10024
(212) 787-0626

Everything You Always Wanted to Know

Help is at hand for Jewish parents who want to welcome their baby girl into Judaism with all the traditional importance of the baby boy's "*bris.*"

Blessing the Birth of a Daughter: Jewish Naming Ceremonies for Girls has just been published by Toby Reifman with Ezrat Nashim ("Help for Women"), one of the first Jewish feminist groups. The 20-page booklet is available for $2 from

Toby Reifman
Dept. L
231 Sunset Avenue
Englewood, NJ 07631

A consultant service is also available for personalized covenantal and naming ceremonies for baby girls. For advice in developing and performing your own ceremony, write to Jewish Theological Seminary students

Nina Cardin and Carol Glass
299 Riverside Drive Apt. 3D
New York, NY 10025

Include your name, address, telephone number and the best time for them to phone.

Books

The mothers we've had and the mothers we are

Her Mothers

Her Mothers by E.M. Broner
Hardcover, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $7.95, 245 pp.; Paperback, Berkley Medallion, $1.75, 240 pp.

Reviewed by Susan Hersh Sachs

"Mother, I'm pregnant with a baby girl and you will be proud of her."

"Why?"

"She is pleasant to the customers, respectful to her parents, distant from her friends."

"An ideal daughter."

When we read these lines we are already well into this experimental novel on female role models. Beatrix Palmer is an unqualified success as a writer, but as the mother of a 17-year-old runaway daughter, she doubts her success as a woman. Trying to understand her daughter by exploring her own daughterhood, she recalls the maternal criticism that tormented her and her girlfriends. She realizes that all mothers are, in fact, trying to raise ideal daughters.

If this is so, we need ideal mothers; and if our biological mothers cannot serve as role models, perhaps our historical mothers can. So Beatrix Palmer researches our Historical Mothers: Emily Dickinson, Margaret Fuller, Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Forten. She discovers that these enabling, self-demeaning women cannot serve as our role models, either.

Beatrix goes searching in Israel, beginning with our Foremothers. Of Sarah, the first Jewish woman, she writes that all the Egyptian soldiers "took their pleasure with her while Avram sat outside of the tent, drinking their water, eating their provisions.... counting his newly gained sheep, oxen, asses, camels." After describing Rivka, Rachel and Leah, all exploited by their men, she cries, "Who named *you* my mothers? Who named *this* a matriarchy?"

Susan Hersh Sachs has written for Sh'ma *and* Studies in American Jewish Literature. *She is currently teaching a course for 11- and 12-year-old girls on Women in Orthodox Judaism.*

Her stories of modern Israeli women show them also totally victimized, primarily by fathers disturbed at the daughters' successes. But the archetypal victims are the survivors of Nazism, "The Tattooed People. The Experimented-On People. Still, they live."

Beatrix ultimately comes to view herself a survivor, affirming at the end that, despite being deprived of ideal female images, a woman must be "unafraid."

From *Her Mothers.*

Jong as a Jew

How to save your own life

How to save your own life by Erica Jong
Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $8.95, 310 pp. including appendix of love poems.

Reviewed by Sonya A. Michel

Part of the process of liberating ourselves as women involves the creation of our own culture—unique modes of female communication, networks of support, the aesthetic of everyday life. At the same time—perhaps only as a futile reflex of our conditioning in mass patriarchal society—we continue to look hopefully to mainstream culture, searching for signs that popular consciousness has been raised, that women's situation is being seriously considered. When the makers of that culture are also women, we are all too prone to assume that they are writing or painting or singing for—and to—all of us. Surely the title of Erica Jong's new novel, *How to save your own life*, invites us to make just such an assumption.

The novel continues the story of Isadora Wing, the heroine of Jong's first novel, *Fear of Flying*. Having written a very similar novel, *Candida Confesses*, Isadora must now deal with the double anguish of instant fame and disintegrating marriage.

It will come as no great surprise that the recipe she proposes is love. Find the right man and you can leave your stale and painful marriage, assuage your guilt over acquiring fame and its unasked for complement of responsibility, break through your writer's block, and dissolve all the contradictions of the female social role. Love acts as an invisible protective shield around your life.

How to save your own life opens on the day Isadora takes leave of her husband Bennett, then flashes back to the events which have brought her to this moment. At first glance, her itinerary reads like a public relations dream, but in fact the plot has been borrowed from formula pornography, functioning mainly as a device to get us from one waterbed to the next. Isadora spins through several extramarital affairs, has the obligatory lesbian relationship, joins in the grand finale orgy, and, in an idyllic epilogue, is locked in passionate embrace with her true love in the bedroom of their glass-walled house cantilevered over the Pacific.

What can Isadora's story tell us about survival? It is unlikely that any of us is going to write a best seller in the next 12 months; nor can we be sure of finding true love. But let us look not at the details of Isadora's life, but at the sources of her strength. Jong eliminates two of the more obvious ones: ethnic bonds and other women.

Like dozens of American-Jewish writers before her, Jong seems ambivalent about the heritage of Judaism. Isadora's

Jewish identity is tenuous at best. In *Fear of Flying*, Isadora described her mother as a pagan who celebrated the summer and winter solstices instead of the Jewish holidays. In this novel, she muses that her maiden name (Weissmann shortened to Weiss and Anglicized to White) is counterfeit. Jong also takes potshots at Brooklyn accents and nose jobs ("If all the missing pieces of nose in Beverly Hills could be put end to end, they would reach all the way to Poland").

Yet when Isadora discovers that Bennett's lover is a *shiksah*, she suddenly turns righteous and feels doubly betrayed. Like Philip Roth's Alexander Portnoy, Isadora takes her revenge by having an affair with a woman who is a "Mayflower descendant." But while getting back at her husband, Isadora is also betraying her own sex. Disarming and candid, Isadora admits that she makes love to Rosanna out of curiosity and "horniness mingled with what I can only call bisexual chic... It was stylish to have a lesbian affair that year...."

Because the novel is confined to Isadora's consciousness, its events and characters have no significance outside their immediate effect on her well-being. It is no wonder that Isadora often feels passive, victimized, immobile; her imagination fails to move beyond the boundaries of narcissism to explore the complexity of the world around her.

"Even autobiography is not interesting if it is only about its subject," Isadora tells us with great authority. "Unless that subject becomes everywoman, unless that story becomes myth, it is of no interest to anyone but the subject—and perhaps her mother." But the subject of this novel is Isadora, so fragmented by her self-preoccupation that she cannot stand even for herself as being-in-the-world, much less for "everywoman." She is the quintessence of individualism, loyal to no one but herself—and perhaps to her new lover. Her family, other women, her ethnic roots—all of them Isadora uses opportunistically. In Jong's world, men and women are equally undependable and treacherous, so sisterhood makes no more sense than any other form of bonding. True love is the only answer.

How to save your own life holds out the promise of a contribution to women's culture, but then delivers only solipsism and romance. Feminists will realize that this is not the stuff of which liberation is made. 〓

Sonya A. Michel, co-author of The Jewish Woman in America, *is a Ph.D. candidate in American Civilization at Brown University.*

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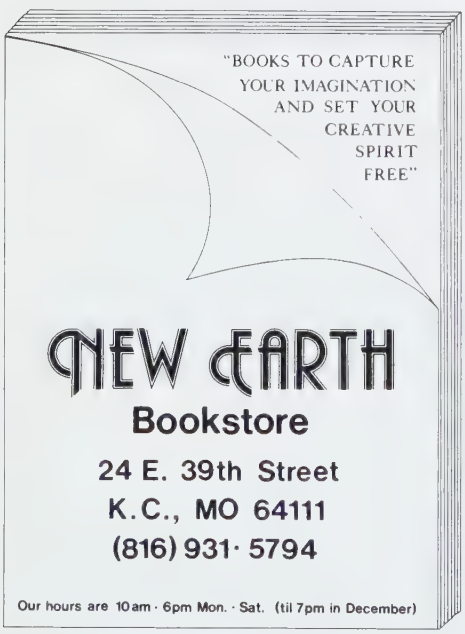

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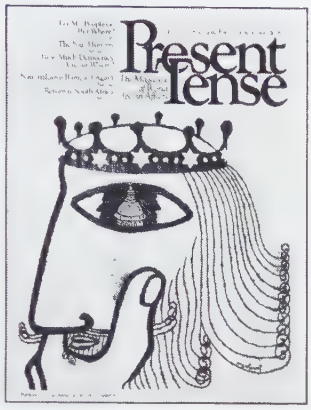

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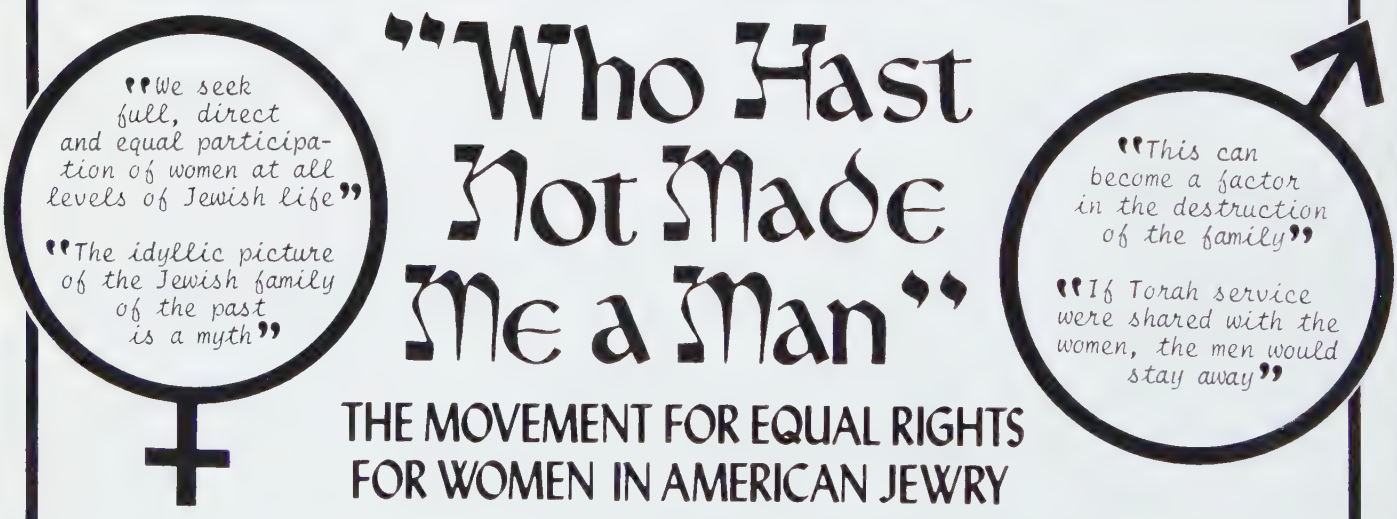
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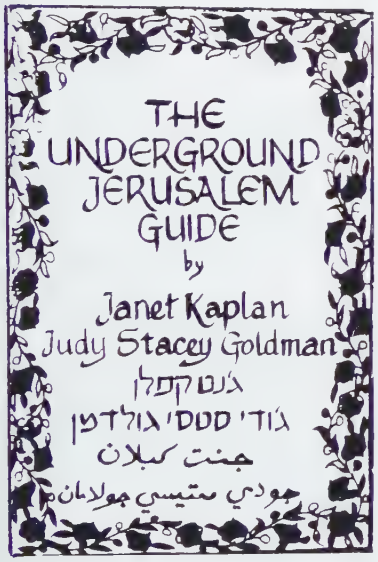

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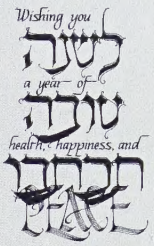

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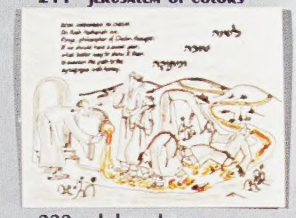
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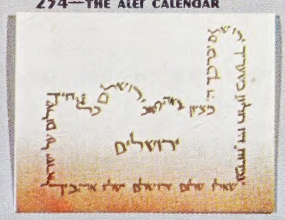

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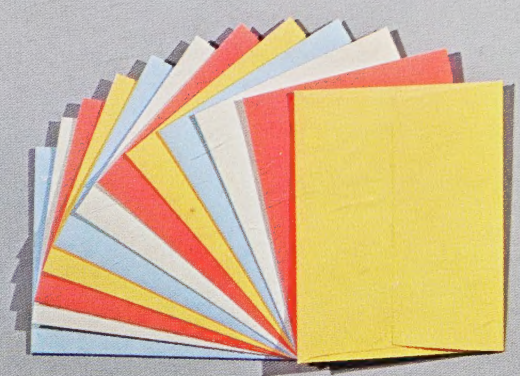

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